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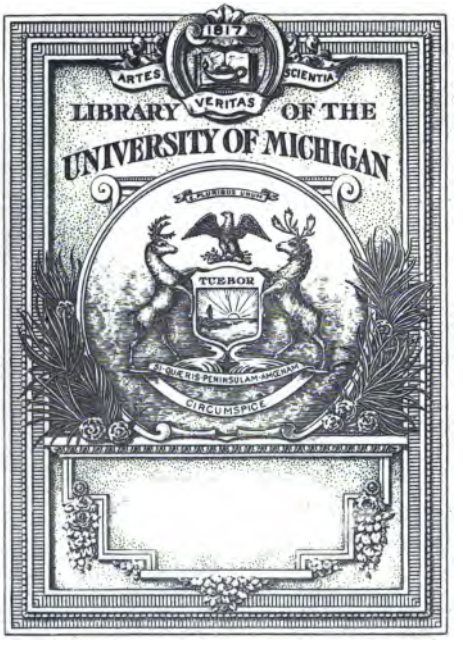

THE GIFT OF
Victor F. Brown

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I hope it may do
good, & comfort the
comforted

I am very cordially
yours Henry Ward Beecher

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COMFORTING THOUGHTS

SPOKEN BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER

IN

Sermons, Addresses, and Prayers

ARRANGED BY

IRENE H. OVINGTON

NEW YORK
FORDS, HOWARD, AND HULBERT
1893

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TO

THE MANY SORROWING ONES OF EARTH

This Little Book is Dedicated,

IN LOVING MEMORY OF ONE

WHO THROUGH YEARS OF PATIENT SUFFERING

WAS STRENGTHENED IN HER FAITH

BY THE WORDS OF

THE PLYMOUTH PASTOR.

L. H. O.

BROOKLYN, Aug. 9, 1884.

1-16-31 Lwd

When I am dead, strew flowers upon my grave; but let no heathenish practice prevail at my funeral, of putting on black drapery and the livery of sorrow for a soul which has passed through the shadow of death into eternal life.

N.
Victor I. Francis
6-12-30

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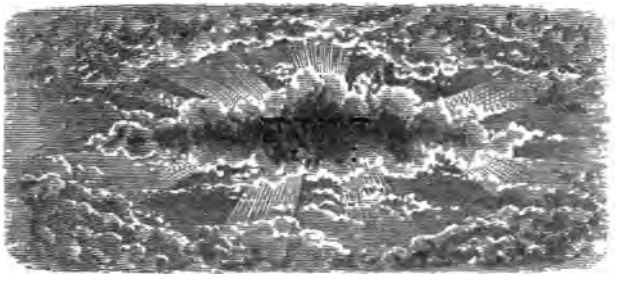
WHEN our Master was about to send out his disciples, he thought he would give them a pearl necklace; and it is extraordinary to see what kind of pearls he strung on that string, which is called "The Beatitudes," in Matthew. There never was such a necklace made before; and among the pearls, and one of the largest of them, is "Blessed are they that mourn." To be in a condition to mourn, then, is to be in a condition of divine benediction.

"As One whom his Mother comforteth, so will I comfort You." — *Isa. lxvi. 13.*

THERE are happy and easy souls that are buoyed up by inward hopefulness and outward prosperities, who can hardly understand the need of so much being said about God's consolations, and who scarcely derive any light or comfort from those numerous passages in the word of God that to others are like water in the wilderness.

There are some, less happy, who, in themselves, in their friends, in the church, in the world, see full enough for anxiety, often for discouragement, and sometimes even for despondency; who, indeed, seem to themselves to have a hard time in life: and to all such, whether this feeling be founded on reality, or upon an exaggerated sense of the troubles that they bear, the words that I have read, and such like words, must come with peculiar cheer.

There is a singular sweetness in this and similar passages when they are regarded as voices sent down to men in their struggles through life. They are like open glades in a dark forest, where the sun lies on warm banks, the father of many flowers. And so these openings with summer in them have peculiar relish and charm to many.



I.

God is Love.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort." — II. Cor. i : 3.

What is the great name of Jehovah? When I look up and behold the throne blazing with that whose sparks made mother-love in the world, and

when I behold sitting on that throne One who cares and loves and longs, and through infinite ages with infinite patience waits for the unfolding of the low, bringing them up in sections and ages higher and higher, until the world shall blossom, and the consummation of the millenial day be at hand, I can not withhold adoration; and I join with those that cry out, "Thou art worthy to reign." Love always, love universal; love that suffers for those whom it loves, and, having loved, loves them unto the end, — to that I can and I do bow my understanding, my heart, and my conscience.

When Paul looked up into the face of God, that is the way God looked to him, — as "the Father of mercies," as "the God of all comfort." He was not the thunderer; he was not the stern judge; he was not even creator or ruler: those were not the thoughts that most often came into Paul's mind. He was God of all consolation.

Elsewhere he calls him "the God of compassion," and compassion is suffering with those that suffer. His life was inflamed by a sense of the beauty, the love, the tenderness, the glory, the goodness, of God. The rainbow never died out. The storm of suffering in his life was for ever encircled by thoughts of divine beauty.

To make the character of this noble, beautiful,

patient, gentle, loving, father-hearted God known as the cure of sin, as the remedy of suffering, of life itself, — that was the aim and the ambition of his whole ministry.

TAKE whatever is good in man, and argue that God is not only that, but infinitely better than that. In fashioning your conception of God, make it as resplendent in justice, as august in truth, as noble and pure in love, as radiant and wondrous in pity. and as enduring, as you please. Never be afraid that you will overdraw the divine character. God is never better in your thought or imagination than he is in himself.

As one familiar with the sonatas and the symphonies of Beethoven, while passing along the street in summer, gets, from out of the open window, a snatch of a song or a piece that is being played, catching a strain here and another there — and says to himself, "Ah, that is Beethoven. I recognize that: it is from such and such a movement of the Pastoral," or whatever it may be; — so men in life catch strains of God in the mother's disinterested and self-denying love, in the lover's glow, in the little child's innocent affections. Where did this thing come from? No plant ever brought out such fruit as this.

As birds, when after moulting they begin to sing, break down in mid-song, and give only a snatch here and a snatch there of the full volume of their summer strains; so the hints, the little tinkling notes of love on earth, beautiful as they are in themselves, are not perfect, and are not understood until we trace them back, and feel that there is above, somewhere, One whose nature embraces all these things.

No character of God is rightly put together or rightly conceived of in which the overruling sovereignty does not inhere in love. And any character of God which is fashioned to produce any other impression than that, any character which presents him to your thought as more wise than love, more true than love, more pure than love, any conception of God which is stronger in your mind than that of a real sympathetic, loving God, — is false.

I THINK the sweetest thought, the very central idea, of the revelation of the character of God to me, is this: that he does every thing out of his supreme will. There is no one thing that I can say with more heartiness, or that has in it more echoes of joy, than "Thy will be done." If any thing works righteousness in me or in you, it is God. The nature of

God is fruitful in generosity. He is so good, that he loves to do good, and loves to make men good, and loves to make them happy by making them good. He loves to be patient with them, and to wait for them, and to pour benevolence upon them, because that is his nature.

I WOULD not say that God turns the brightest side of his nature to those who have stumbled and fallen; but in all those ways in which men are harassed by a sense of mistake that might have been avoided, in all their struggles under great sorrows and bereavements, in those sorrows which come in a rain of distress, in all the alarms of life, in all the burdens that come upon men, — over against them stands a Saviour adapted to the special sorrow that they themselves carry. He is all in all; that is, in every part of a man's life there is an aspect of God in Jesus Christ that mitigates the special trouble, that is adapted to the special want: and the revelation of God's love in Jesus Christ should enable every man who puts trust in him, and accepts him as the guide and captain of his salvation, to rise higher. It lifts him in the time of his emergency, shelters him in danger, and brings him to that rest which does not depend upon conscious purity, but depends upon a sense of God's love, and upon trust and faith in him.

THE Divine Spirit sometimes comes as the mother may come among her children,—with the rod, or with the reproof of her tongue, short and decisive; but the characteristic coming of the Spirit, like the mother's wonted coming, is a coming with gentleness, with tenderness, with kindness, with lovingness.

THE moment a soul binds itself trustingly to the bosom of its loving God by love, nature has God's command to take care of him, and providence has God's command to take care of him, and God's wakeful Spirit for ever broods over him and works in him.

WHEN you cry out for God, he will cry out for you. There was never a heart homesick for heaven, that heaven was not homesick for it. Never did a soul long for God, that God did not long for that soul.

IF a man is built right inwardly, when trouble comes he hides himself, under the shadow of a great rock, from the pelting sun. To the fortress he flies, and has refuge from his enemies. God is a shield; God is a tower and a defence; God is a sun to men's darkness: and men that are unconsciously allied to

God and his providence have ten thousand consolations and refuges as against trouble.

Men often think, "Oh, if my father were here, he would do so and so." Why do you not go to God? "Well," you answer, "he is divine." Yes, he is divine, but not in the sense that he is *less* good than your father. He is not visible as your father is, he does not speak as your father speaks, he does not touch your hand as your father touches it; but, in so far as that which constitutes the goodness of your father to you, God is unspeakably more than your father is. He is richer in heart, purer in sympathy, and more continuous in his desires and yearnings for you, than any earthly parent can be.

God comforts by the peculiar comforting effect which there is in his soul resting on ours. Christian brethren, do you believe in the Holy Spirit? Do you believe that God's sun actually comes into contact with the lily, and pours it full, warms it, and changes it? Do you believe that the Holy Spirit shines down into the souls of men that open themselves to its influence? I do. I believe it is the intrinsic nature of God shining into the soul that receives it, to bring to it light, and warmth, and hope, and cheer, and comfort unspeakable.

Now tell me, you who complain that there is no God for you in the world, have you ever felt that you had gone to the furthermost bound of human endurance, when it seemed as though flesh must fail? And have you never in that moment been able to look up, and feel, "Lord God, help"? Has not need ever interpreted succor?

EVERY father and mother, when the helpless child is born into the household, rejoices, and gives thanks to God. They rejoice and give thanks, not because of what it is now, but because of what it may become. The mother gives to it her nights and days. The father gives to it all his leisure and all his occupation. The father and mother work and co-work, determining what, if their efforts are successful and their hopes are realized, that child shall be. They foresee and predestinate, and call effectually, and work together to bring that child up good and true and prosperous.

We are taught to say, "Our Father who art in heaven." We are taught, that, when men are born into this world, God looks, in a sympathetic, paternal way, along down the path of life, and says, "All the power, and all the sympathy, and all the co-operative influences of the world, and all nature itself, are to serve this young, trusting, loving, immortal spirit."

RIGHT over against the gloomy face of fear stands the Lord Jesus Christ and these words of ineffable cheer: "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts." I can not read such a passage as this without feeling that it is like a mother's putting her hand on her child's head, and soothing it, and stroking down its curls, and fondling it, or putting her arms about it and caressing it. As a mother not simply speaks, but in a thousand winning ways carries out the words in practice, so, when I read this passage, it is as though God's Spirit caressed me, and was bringing me comfort.

THAT is just what hearts that are sick want,—*comfort;* and they have it in Christ Jesus and in the fatherhood of God, and nowhere else in such measure, or with such pertinency of application.

HE that rules the ages and the races of men is one that loves, and is, through love, willing to suffer for them, rather than let them suffer for him. He himself declares that he is the burden-bearer of the universe. All things that live seek their life at his hands. Of the very birds, not one falls to the ground without his notice.

THAT conviction of a helpful, loving, waiting, patient God encourages and sustains me. To him I fly. My physician, cure me. Schoolmaster, bear with my stupidity, and teach me. Give me thy help. Lead me up and on, until at last I see thee as thou art. Then with all my soul I shall say, "Not unto me, but unto thy goodness and thy love and thy wisdom, be the praise of my salvation, for ever and ever." *Amen.*

THIS world is a cradle; and God rocks it, and hears its cry, and knows its need.

IN the darkened household, in the desolation of being overthrown in various ways, when every thing on earth seems gloomy, it is a good thing for a man to say: "Every thing is bright up there. Christ loves me, and has redeemed me by his own precious blood. I have a portion in Gethsemane; I am an heir with him to the inheritance of the kingdom of love. Beat in the roof, storm in the windows, scatter what I have as most precious, take away friends and honor and every thing; but do not take away my God, nor this view of him."

It is an anchor that will hold men when nothing else can.

FROM PRAYERS.

GRANT unto us, O Lord our God! that light of faith by which we shall discern thee in every thing. Art not thou the tree of life to us? Dost thou not give shadows, as the trees do? But when winter comes, then thou art not the tree, that with shadow brings chill. Thou art the very sun. Thou art our warmth and our light. Thou art, O Lord! our food. When we are faint, thou art the water of life to comfort us. Thou art our star, shining in the darkness, and telling us the way when we are lost. Though we can not see what it is, we follow its light without questioning, and are rescued. Thou art our rest and our home. Thou art all in all.

Now we beseech of thee that we may have this consciousness of God with us. Be thou a refuge to us. Let our souls fly to thee as doves to their windows. Let thy heart be the pavilion in which we are placed until the storm be overpast.

SINCE thou hast called us children, and put the arms of thy providence about us, nourished us, and comforted us in times of trouble, we will trust in thee, and live in that faith far beyond our understanding of thy ways.

We can not perceive the mystery of life; but we believe in thee, and that thou art not only all that is best in men, out of all proportion to any experience of men, but that thou art a being of attribute and of character such as no man can understand in this state.

We thank thee, our Father, that thou hast not clothed thyself with terror; that thou dost not fill the future with fear. We draw near to thee by Him who is called *Saviour, Friend, Redeemer;* and, when we are taken by his hand and presented to thee, we behold thy name. It is *Father.* We are taught to call thee by this endearing name. In thee is refuge and rescue to those that are outside of thee, tossed with fear and with dread. We take refuge as children in our Father's house. We run to thee in every time of fear, that we may be saved. And we rejoice.

We pray, O Lord! if there be those now in thy presence who are in sorrow or bereavement, who are in manifold affliction, that they may find the communion of the Spirit refreshing and comforting to their souls. For thou art the consoler. Thou art the comforter. Ten thousand hast thou comforted in prison, on the scaffold, in the wilderness, on beds of sickness, in solitary places. Thou art the comforter still. Not as one man is comforter to another art thou; but thy comforting influence is spread all abroad through the heaven and the earth, among all the sorrowing. Thou dost love with divine and sacred energy, and dost grant consolation to all that are in trouble.

II.

The Word of the Lord.

"This is mine comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me." — Ps. cxix : 50.

In the midst of this vast and ever unwearied breaking of the surge on the shore of experience, how cheerful, how joyous, are the words of God! There is one reason why the Bible will never be upset just

as long as the world lasts. You may prove that there is no such thing as inspiration; you may take from the prophets and apostles their authority; you may take away the theory that the Bible came in any sense from God. Yet there is that in this book which will keep it intact, and make it potential, as long as there is a heart to feel sorrow or to beat with hope; and that is its humanity.

One familiar figure, in the Bible, of the door, is that of a refuge, where David speaks of God as being his tower, into which he runs, and is safe. He represents himself as having been overthrown in battle, and pursued near to some guarded city, where the gate-man, seeing the soldiers scattered, opens it, and allows them to enter, and then closes it, and shuts out their pursuers. How many have had troubles pursue them like armed men, and run in to God, and been saved!

The Bible is God's house. Here in this book is where saints have lived. Here is where holy men have persevered. Here is where men in great distress have learned how valiantly to endure and to achieve. This book is filled full of dear associations. Here are passages that I walked through when my first-born died. Here is where I found

comfort when I was in great distress and torment. Here is where I first saw the Star of Bethlehem.

THE power of love, and the power of sympathy, and the power of succor through sympathy and love, — that is the revelation of the Bible.

WHILE in the philosophy of Seneca, and in the philosophy of the Stoics generally, you see many things that are admirable, and that might well be texts from our Bible, yet you do not see in any religion or philosophy a grappling with the whole fact of suffering in its varied relations; you do not see there any central principle by which suffering may become the greatest boon of humanity. In Christianity alone do you find that.

YOU may say what you please about the inspiration of the Scriptures: as long as there are tears in the world, and sorrows that make them, so long the books of the New Testament will be considered authoritative; and for this simple reason, that they bring balm to the wants of men where men's wants are most immedicable with any ordinary dealing.

I DO not believe there is in the compass of human

literature a book that deals with such profound topics, that touches human nature on so many sides of experience, that relates so especially to its sorrows, its temptations, and yet which looks over the whole field of human life with such cheerfulness of spirit. The New Testament is a book of radiant joy.

THE New Testament is full of cheer and of brightness from Christ's manifestation of sympathy; and the Book of the Hebrews, arguing to the Jewish mind, and therefore employing Jewish symbols, is peculiarly full of this glorious truth of the active and sympathetic nature of God.

That the silent Jesus is not now gone forward to other things, that he dwells above to maintain intimate and helpful relations with all who love him here, that he is nearer to men than when he was present with them, that it was needful for our sakes that he should go up to his own sphere, and resume his spiritual nature, — these are abundantly the teachings of the New Testament.

ALL the way through the Gospels, all the way through the letters of the apostles, they write almost with a mother's tenderness. They take the side of mankind in misfortune, in sorrow, in sin, and in trouble.

No susceptible nature ever reads the marvelous chapters containing Christ's love-talk in the seclusion of home and in the last hours that he was spending peacefully with his disciples, without feeling that they are full of meanings for which ordinary life furnishes no clew.

THERE are promises in God's word that no man has ever tried to find; there are treasures of gold and silver in it that no man has taken the pains to dig for; there are medicines in it for the want of a knowledge of which hundreds have died.

I WISH you to call to mind the wonderful tenderness and delicacy of the sacred Scriptures upon the matter of death. In the Old Testament we shall find, with the exception of one book, and that a dramatic book, — I speak of Job, — that death is always spoken of, I will not say with respect, but with great tenderness and beauty. "They are gathered to their fathers," — a beautiful allegory, as of a homeless wanderer going to home and rest and kindred in the evening of life; and throughout all the Old Testament, except where it is used for dramatic or poetic expression, this delicacy of allusion to death is preserved.

III.

Jesus Wept.

"In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." — Isa. lxiii : 9.

I feel this morning the liberty and the rights of Christians in such a scene as this, — the liberty that

Christ gives us of tears and of unrebuked sorrow. There may be a state of exaltation by which one shall rise above the consciousness of the present; but that is a rare case, exceptional in the ordinary course of nature. It is impossible that all the stream of affections, the habits of life, the necessities and duties of each hour, should be brought to a sudden and peremptory close, and there be no rebound and suffering. The cords which are meant to attach us to those round about us can not be broken suddenly, and no pain come with the snap. The heart solacing itself every day with the comfort and the interchangeable duties of love, can not find itself at once deprived and not feel the void. There is to be a time of sadness, and it pleases God to grant us that liberty. Tears may flow, and the heart may ache, and it is not necessarily any resistance to the divine will, nor unsubmissiveness; indeed, it is the course of nature, sanctified to every one of us by the example of our Lord and Master, who himself in scenes of bereavement wept, and permitted weeping.

Nor are we all called, as Christians, to have at once the full and open vision of rest and blessedness for our departed ones. If we have it, thanks be to God! But, if it does not come in an hour, there is no need that we should afflict ourselves with self-reproaches. We do not demand the impossible

of our own children; we do not, even in chastising them, forget their frame: we temper all our administration according to what they are. Now, like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust. With an infinite nursing and nourishing compassion, God surrounds those who are in trouble with his own almighty patience; so that, after the blinding of tears and the weariness of an afflicted affection, they begin little by little to come back: and as flowers bent down by rain straighten up again afterward, so under God's nourishment, and sympathy with our weakness, with our want of a sure faith, little by little we find our strength regained, our faith renewed, and our hearts sustained, by the consciousness that he is helping us at every step.

WHAT was your mother's nature, that cried when you cried, or laughed away your tears, and watched you by night and through the day, and died taking care of you? You know what that is in a mother. "Oh! is there a God like that?" Yes, one as much better than that as infinity is better than finiteness, — as much better than that as divinity is better than humanity. No latitude or longitude can measure the orb of the glory of that heart which is in God, and which is manifested by Jesus Christ.

SOMETIMES I have thought in my meditation, "If Christ would descend but as a beam of light, that I might see him, it would be such a help to my senses!" And I have listened at night, I have listened in hours of sorrow, and I have heard nothing. I have called, and none has answered. I have reached out imploring hands, and nothing took them. I have said, "My Lord and my God, if thou art, *speak to me!*" and there has been no response. And yet out of these hours I have come, feeling still that a silent and invisible God can be more to me, taking life all through, than if he were actually present and visible in a bodily form. I take hold of the invisible by more sides than I do of the visible.

THE sustaining and upholding Christ is not gone from the world because we do not see him. He still walks, though not in Jerusalem alone.

IN the midst of all perplexity, doubt, distress, care, fear, guilt, remorse, in the midst of all forms of disturbance which take us away, — in the midst of all these there is a voice which calls out, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus Christ's heart is the nest of the soul. Scared by any trouble, by any

disappointment, by any sorrow, pursued as birds by hawks, there is a refuge. There he will give you rest. "Take my yoke upon you, and my burden, and you shall find rest unto your souls. My yoke is easy, my burden is light." Whoever puts himself in agreement with the heart, thought, and feeling of God as manifested in Jesus Christ, has, in all his sorrow and trouble, a refuge in the Saviour which never fails.

Our dear Master is father and mother to us; and the sympathy of Christ with us — do not suppose it is just this: that when you are glad, Christ is glad; and when you are sorrowful, Christ is sorrowful. It is that, to be sure; but it is a thousand times more than that.

And wherever men are struggling, and striving, and suffering, be sure that the life of Christ is there. For he does not wrap himself up in his heavenly home, and look out of the window, only, upon this far-off earth: he lives in our nature.

All those indescribable and tender graces which make *mother* the queenly name in all the earth, Christ has in such abundance and perfectness that a mother's heart by the side of his would be like a

taper at mid-day. All that which the child yearns for while a child, and remembers with homesickness afterwards, when grown up; all those qualities that make men look back for their paradise to their childhood, and make them feel too often that life is a wilderness, and their early homes the place of love and joy and sweet fruition,—are not so dominant in father and mother as they are in Jesus. He is more fatherly than fathers, and more motherly than mothers.

LOVE, which is represented in the New Testament, and of which Christ was the particular exemplar, is sympathy for universal sentient existence, for all that live. And it is a sympathy which carries their welfare with it. It is love, whether it strike, or pierce, or slay, or give bitter medicine, or give the cup of sorrow, or give the cup of joy. It is love, whether it wring tears or inspire smiles.

CLOTHED with patience and sympathy, Jesus Christ presents himself to us. He went about doing good. He wept. He sorrowed. He walked with the poor and the needy.

GRIEF always says, "There never was such suffering as mine; there never was such peculiar grief as

mine. Others have had sorrows; but ah! I could bear such or such a sorrow." Everybody could bear every sorrow except the one that he has. And grief always says, "Mine stands apart and outside of every ordinary experience." And above us all is the Saviour, saying, "Come boldly to me in every time of need, for succor and for help. For I have been tried in every respect as you are, and without sin. I am therefore a High-Priest that can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities. Come to me."

"RETURN unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." How many there are in whose minds will spring up, at the utterance of these words, instances, thousands, which I can not recount or discern or know! How many of you, if you turn your thought to the way in which you have been delivered and guided, may have occasion to say with all your heart, "God hath dealt bountifully: I will rest in him; I will build my nest and brood hereafter in the bosom of my Saviour"! In this spirit let us draw near to the simple but joyful ordinance of communion of the Lord's Supper, where by simple symbols we are brought to recognize that Christ suffered that we might go clear of suffering; that he died that we might live; that he was troubled in order that we might know how to rise above our troubles by his strength.

THIS view of what Christ was, and what his atonement was, is the one that I would by all means enforce upon you, — namely, the design of the Spirit of God and the nature of God in the person of Jesus Christ to teach and set example of perfect charity and perfect kindness, and especially to the poor and the needy; and then, in the sublime termination of this crowned drama, to offer up that which concentrates in the human imagination every element that constitutes love, standing before the whole of coming time and the generations of men, to teach by his suffering and death the eternal center of power. God is such an one, — love and love alone; and the nature of love is to suffer for those who need protection, for their enrichment, for their upbuilding, for their education and their final salvation.

OUR dear Master loves us; and, loving us, he means to make something out of us, And his sympathy is an echo of our heart. The sympathy of Christ works in us by seeking to draw us up, above all the familiar experiences of our woe, into his own nature and character.

How the personality of Christ is seen in all these elements of a great and noble nature! His very eye threw down the soldiers, and abashed men, and put

them to silence; and when he chose, he could wear a grandeur that humbled the disciples so that they would walk trembling behind him. And yet there would come out a radiance of sweetness and sympathy. Through all his life you will find him going where people were, sitting down with those in distress, or walking with them. He was tender even when they were not grown up, as in the case of the little children who interrupted his sermon. He was grieved because his disciples attempted to keep them from him; and he said, "Suffer little children to come unto me." If they had not come, he would have gone to them; and he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

When the child died, and the centurion said, "Trouble him no longer, she is dead," and they laughed him to scorn, he went in and took the little maiden by the hand, and she lived. He could just as well have called her. No: there was that in him which brought his person to every one of them. He wanted to identify himself with them. It is just the action that you see in a mother when she can not keep her hands from her darling, but wants to touch it, to feel it.

CHRIST promises his disciples, that if they love him, and if they will but open the door through which alone God can enter into the human soul, — the great golden gate of love, — he will come in, and the Father

with him, and that there shall be a love-life begun. Therefore he declared to them that it was expedient that he should go forth from them; and that when he was gone from them, it would not be extinguishment, it would not be forgetfulness: he still would live, and his power would be enhanced, — he would have all power. And his promise to them was, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The separation, then, was to result in a higher unity, ineffable, transcending all that is known upon earth.

CHRIST is nearer to us, dearer, and more sympathizing in all the practical applications of sympathy, than when he walked clothed with the human form upon earth. It is taught that this relationship is so intimate and effectual that he is concerned and affected by our whole experience. Our feelings, as it were, throw their shadows continually upon him. He joys with us; he sorrows with us; he makes our case his own. No language can parallel that which he employs. He comes into us, and abides with us. He takes us unto himself, that, as he is one with the Father, so we may be one with him. As the branch sympathizes with all that befalls the parent stock, and as the parent stock also feels whatever mutilation there is of the branch, so Christ represents his disciples as being most intimately related to him.

To be loved of God; to be nurtured here; to be disciplined; to be taught; to be prepared for the heavenly estate, and then go home to be present with the Lord for ever, — that is joy unspeakable, as it shall be full of glory.

May God give us this better portion, and so may Christ's sympathy make us better men!

THE Christ that delivered us; the Christ that sustained us when our babe dropped away from our arms; the Christ that held us up when all men were against us, and it seemed as though the full breath of winter was cutting through and through; the Christ of the household, my mother's Christ, my father's Christ, the Christ of all my life, — at last begins to rise before me in my later years. As I die, I do not go toward the barren and the voiceless land: I go toward all that my heart has ever known of joy and of nobility.

AND SO, as a bird flies up out of a storm-shaken forest, and seeks more peaceful places, his spirit had lifted itself higher than battle, and above its stroke or sound.

FROM PRAYERS.

SINCE we have known thee, O Lord! thou interpreter of the Father, we have learned to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and help in time of need. All that sweet history of thine, that little which hath been recorded, we read it, how often, with blinded eye; but in the time of our deep distress, with what strange insight do we read it! The love of God, the mercy of God, the drawings of his heart, the longings and desires which transcend parental affection, — how do these shine out!

TEACH us to walk as seeing thee who art invisible. O Face of light! O Face of love! O Face of joy! Shine upon us by day and by night, that, looking upon thee, we may be able to hide in the blessed light all things we do not wish to look upon, and that we may live above the world while living in it, and live in sympathy with its men and its duties and its wants.

MAY they be content to stand where the dear Lord has put them, and fulfil the office that he needs some one to fulfil. May none ask why he should suffer. Shall the disciple be greater than his Lord? If thou didst go

down to the lowest and the least, and didst cheerfully walk the bottom way, to the very ignominy of death, shall any refuse to follow thee, — thou pure and spotless, they stained with sin; thou bearing others' trouble, they bearing their own transgressions?

EVERY heart knows its own joy and its own sorrow. Sanctify the joy, or yet more abundantly the sorrow. Grant that those who are chastened may hear the voice of God saying, "Whom I love I chasten, and I scourge every son whom I receive." May every one turn to thee, not so much to escape pain and sorrow, but to emerge out of it with a nobler experience and a better manhood. Give patience to those that are long tried. Give strength to those that sit in weakness and in trouble. May they think of thy long-suffering with them, and be willing to suffer long by themselves.

CONFIRM in every one the purposes of a noble life. May we help one another. May we bear one another's burdens. O thou who art the very light of life, and who hast tasted sorrow and darkness, and hath slept in the sepulcher, forget not thy servants who walk in twilight or midnight.

MAY none be unwilling to take his cross and bear it. Blessed be thy name, that thou didst bow, that thou didst bend, that thou didst desire thy trouble to be removed and didst pray for it; but didst, by the blessed fortitude

and endurance of love, drink the cup, and wouldst not suffer it to pass, since it was the will of God that thou shouldst drink it. And may we, more feeble and failing and fearing than thou wert, and with less discipline than thine, be able to bear the things that are not taken off at our cry. And if the thorn be piercing and painful, and we beseech thee thrice, grant at least that thy grace may be sufficient.

Do any feel that life is too hard for them to bear? May they understand that the servant is not greater than the Master. May they look unto their crowned Saviour, whose crowns were thorns, who deserved all good and had all ill; and may they be patient, waiting for the fulfillment of his providence, and the interpretation of his dealings with them.

There are hours of vision given, hours of glory, hours when the whole earth seems to us illuminated by thy presence, and joy overflows; and it seems to us as though we should be called to abide thus upon the Mount of Transfiguration forever. And there come to us, also, hours of darkness and trouble, when we fain would lay down the burden of life and go forth; and at times then thou dost permit us by faith to rise beyond the sight of mortal things, and to enter into the gate, and to walk among the spirits of the blessed. Thou dost not grant us yet to abide thus; and the memory from day to day of such blessedness comforts us, and even despondency passes away; and though we may not be luminous, we are patient, and we live by faith, and are saved by hope.

IV.

Could Ye not Watch with Me One Hour?

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." — ROM. viii : 17.

CHRIST knew that the great darkness which was to overwhelm him was approaching. And he went

to a retired place on purpose, and carried thither the most sympathetic of his disciples, and set them down, while he went on beyond, and said to them, "Now watch, for I go yonder to pray." Yet what could they do? What can a little child do that looks up into the face of the mother, and sees her tears dropping one by one, and knows not what ails her, and still less knows how to comfort her, and can only once in a while climb up in her lap, and say, "Don't cry, mother"? Were the disciples any stronger than that? To watch with Christ is, that the heart of Jesus in his great trial would be comforted if those whom he loved and who loved him were present with him, and were in sympathy with him. The nature of God is, to need love.

HAVE you never noticed how Beethoven *thinks* in his symphonies, — how in the midst of the grand movement, sweeping on as if it were the sound of winds and birds in some mighty forest, there will suddenly, as it were far away, remotely, come in one single, simple, wailing note, while every thing is going on? And then, before you know it, he has modulated the whole symphony; and it follows that one note, and conforms to it, and develops the new theme, opening up in another sphere with a majesty and grandeur incomparable. And so, here, that word *suffer* is the note that is struck in the course

of argument. And now Paul turns and runs out after that, and opens it up, and unfolds it in a most wonderful manner. He has been saying, "Here is the animal life: but there is a spiritual one; and the spiritual life is working against it, and striving to get the uppermost. And the created world is a witness that we are the children of God. And there is the testimony of the Spirit that we are Christ's — if we suffer with him." Ah, how significant that word *suffer!*

WHOEVER would be Christ-like, should be willing to wear Christ's crown; and the crown in which he was revealed to us was not silver nor gold, studded with gems. The crown that Christ wore was worthy of him. He came by suffering to redeem this world from suffering. Shall the servant be greater than the Master? Shall Christ suffer, and you not?

HE is watching with Christ who watches with the Saviour in his earthly ministrations. All who go down in their own personal experiences into deep places; all who become familiar with sorrow; all who sit in darkness; all who come down, as he did, to the very foundations of their hope and of their being, and are obliged then and there to do as Christ did, look up to the loving Father for help, — all

such, if they be faithful, if their trust does not yield, if they grasp firmly that anchor which is sure and steadfast, and hold on through the night and through the storm, are watchers with Christ.

WHOEVER finds his cup filled to the brim with bitterness, which he can not put away from his lips, and which his lips do not dare to drink; whoever finds that tears are his meat and drink, day and night, and yet gives up no particle of hope, but stands in his darkness and in his sufferings, saying, "Jesus, *Jesus*, JESUS!" still laying back his head upon the bosom of Christ's love, and saying, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,"—whoever does these things is watching with Christ, for Christ is working in him. This is the sacred hour of Gethsemane to him. He is truly watching with the Master.

IF your cup seems too bitter, if your burden seems too heavy, be sure that it is the wounded Hand that is holding the cup, and that it is he who carried the cross that is carrying the burden.

Too often we "stoop down," and we look into the sepulchre. Except by a miracle, they that look into the grave for their dead will find darkness only.

FROM PRAYERS.

WE thank thee that thou hast made all thought and all feeling sacred through the suffering of thy Son, our Saviour, and through the revelations of suffering in his apostles and servants; and we thank thee that there are many of thy people and saints upon earth whose sufferings are comforted, and that the voice of victory in the midst of suffering goes forth to them that are as yet speechless in their trouble. Grant to each of us the heroism of a true Christian sympathy in love, in suffering, in fidelity, in all pain, in every thing.

MAY we know how to subdue the world by the power of our sympathy with the world. May we have something of that crowned suffering that thine heart did have.

Is there perplexity in the way of duty? Are there heavy burdens? Are there great troubles and misfortunes? Is the yoke galling to the neck? Is the back weary with the burden? Remember thy promises, and grant unto all that are, in thy providence, thus tried and troubled and afflicted, for their own good, the relief

which they need. Or, if the thorn may not be taken away, give them grace to bear it for Christ's sake. He that was crowned with thorns will not pierce more than they are able to bear, those who put their trust in him. Be this morning a deliverer; this morning a joy-bringer, a light-bearer. Go before every one, saying to each, "This is the way: walk ye in it."

REFRESH thy servants who wearily wait for thee. All burden-bearers, may they feel the touch of God and his strength. May those who have but little faith, have at least the faith of the hem, and, touching the garment of Christ, may they know that there is healing in him. May those who are in trouble learn how to overcome trouble by the greatness of their faith in thee; and may we not seek so much to avoid pain as to glorify pain. Thou didst not throw aside thy crown, though it were of thorns. Thou didst not heal thine own wounds, though there was death in them. Why, shall the Master suffer, and shall we not take our suffering? Shall he be without sin, and shall we be filled with a multitude of transgressions? Shall he suffer for others, and we for our own mistakes only? Teach us to be brave in subduing our pride, that makes suffering so intolerable to us. Teach us to be like little children. And may we lie upon the bosom of thy providence, knowing that the arms of God shall there find us and bear us safely.

V.

I will try Them as Gold is tried.

"Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." — JOHN xv : 2.

A VINE planted in a rich soil tends to outgrow its fruit. It grows rank, and runs and rushes over the trellis. Then comes the vintner with his pruning-

knife, and cuts it back. He will not suffer it to bear leaves alone, but compels it to bear grapes. And so, when, according to the tendency of our nature, we grow rank, and bear leaves in abundance, but no fruit, we are put upon a course of discipline, we are cut back, and are brought into some sort of proportion. We need to be cut back, and suffering is the pruning-knife that does the work.

CHRISTIANITY teaches us that sorrow is divine. Whatever may be the sources of it, there is in it a divine element.

INSTEAD of cares and burdens and troubles being so many misfortunes, they are the influences by which God means to develop every element of our being, and polish it, and make it meet for his kingdom.

THE day of suffering is a short day, but the day of remuneration is an everlasting one.

YOU are by nature full of the flesh; and by sickness, by waste, by disappointments, by overthrows, God could, as it were, hew you so thin that light

might stream through you. But you are opaque now, and that is the problem of your life. You need this indwelling Divine Spirit, but it will come as discipline.

He will pierce men, he will give them pain, he will make them suffer, that through suffering they may come to that which they would not take through joy or love. These pain-bearing influences are a part of the evidence of the moral government of God.

No man should allow himself to be ground out of his manhood by any suffering of the body or the affections, nor by any suffering in life, come what may. Where sorrow works patience, endurance, and fortitude, it is unto life.

To say that pain may have been created in order that it may work out good, and that it may co-operate with love and patience, is in accordance with our experience. God is a God of goodness and gentleness and patience.

Many of you are suffering; you are going through calamities; you are wondering at God's providence.

He is clearing away the surface, and chiseling off the roughness. And you are looking on, and waiting to get back to this, that, and the other worldly thing; while God is thinking of that which is above all price, above all value, measured by an earthly estimation,—the sonship that is in you. And he is trying one in one way, and another in another way. Oh, understand what God is doing to you!

It is best to bring our children up to courage and hardihood, and not to think how we shall save them from suffering; for suffering has in it a divine mission.

From childhood and its earliest days men need to be drawn and to be thrust upward. Pain and sorrow are the thrustings, the pushes as it were. Joys, acting upon desire, draw men upward. Pain, from behind, pushes them up. Pain is not an evil, it is a great good; and a human being created without any more susceptibility to pain than the lower and duller animals have would be worthless, absolutely worthless.

One of the mysteries of this life is, that pain and glorious joy are quite reconcilable. No man ever does a thing that makes him smart in the doing, and

yet is right, that he does not have the testimony of his reason and conscience that it was the thing to do, and is not happier for having done it.

THE sorrows and troubles of this world are discordant wails that men make when God takes them and attempts to bring them up into harmony. If one pipe of an organ is out of tune, all the rest of the organ is against it. That note wails, and wails, and all the other notes are sweet-sounding. By and by the hand of the tuner begins to bring it up, and up and up it goes, crying and whining; but the moment it touches the concert-pitch, it falls in, and there is no longer any conflict of one note with the other. God looks upon human life as rolling on to be endless, and therefore he has regard to that which is best for us in all coming time; to that which shall make us meet for heaven; to that which shall make us the best companions for holy men, for saints, for all that are purified, and have gone home to glory.

SUFFERING and joy, working together, are God's two schoolmasters. They regulate, they discipline, and they fashion men. These are the great factors which inhere in nature, and by which the scheme of God in the universe is being unfolded, and carried on to its final consummation and triumph.

CRYING is good: crying washes out the channels. Heartache is good: it is medicine. It does men good to cry.

IN this great and in many respects strange economy of life, men are not free from suffering. I mean especially *physical* suffering. We often inherit bodies that entail a necessity of suffering. Sickness, bruises, wounds, the various assaults that are made upon human life, — these bring men to pain; and physical pain, in all its ten thousand forms, becomes an element of patience. It is the soul teaching itself to endure under conditions of suffering. It is a new manhood rising up.

WE see in life that no characters are so admirable as those that have been shaped by a great deal of trouble. Dr. Spurzheim, among a thousand other insights and maxims of wisdom, said that no woman was fitted to become a wife until she had seen suffering. I would only correct it by adding that no man is fitted to become a husband who has not seen some suffering. Suffering has on manly natures a ripening influence. It tends to drive one in upon those fountains that not only are inward, but are the most profound. You will see that when brooks flow from the mountains, though as they begin to go down

they move gently and smoothly and sweetly, yet when at last they come to the chasm, the waters plunge down suddenly to the bottom, and, finding no outlet, whirl round and round, and, seizing a rock which happens to be there, turn it over and over perpetually, and wear the place deeper and deeper, so that it never becomes dry. And it is troubles which roll about in men's souls, that dig deep places in them which even in the droughts of summer never are dry.

Too often it is the case that men remember their sorrow, and do not register their joy. But even under afflictions, if men did but know it, there are musical tones which might strike through the requiem's wail. There are lights that might illumine their dark Rembrandtian sorrows.

It is suffering that comes like the pruning-knife on the vine, and stirs the blood of the vine to do a better work than leaf-making. It is suffering that operates like a whip on the child, that reminds him of his sin, and spurs him to action in the right direction. It is like every thing that stimulates and develops in life to "them that are exercised thereby." But in those who throw up their hands and say, "All is lost!" suffering is only evil. To those

who turn from it, saying, "Let me eat and drink, and find pleasure to-day, for to-morrow I die," suffering yields no benfit.

THIS world is not abandoned, and it is not lawless; and pain does not run riot as it pleases. Suffering is God's appointed minister. And by and by, when it has cleared off, it will be about suffering just as it is in the factories, where, when they paint vases with beautiful flowers and running vines, they are smeared with black, and put into the furnace, and are black when they come out, until they are brushed, and the black disappears, and nought but these beautiful flowers and vines remain. Behind the groans and the anguish of men in this world God has been writing, and in the light of the eternal world results will be seen of which we have no conception here. It does not yet appear what we shall be. We are sons of God. We come through tears. There have been many in every age of the world who have been saved by the washing of their garments in blood. A strange bath! A strange white that comes from crimson! But so it is.

WE leave something of our hearts in every place where joy or sorrow comes to us. And so the hearth; the door-stone; the old tree, that threw its branches

over the house where we were reared as children; the well, into which, from day to day, many tears, it may be, were dropped, as the mother went to and fro; the brook, that sang to our sighing; the mountain ravine, where we wandered to get rid of busy life; a thousand places that in youth or in struggling manhood have been witnesses to our deep emotions, — these things become personal to us, and afterwards throw back, in their shadow, something of our own selves upon us, and greet us with a human sympathy.

No priestly hand can give virtue to stone or to mortar. There is but one priest, and that is the human heart, and there is but one thing, and that is human experience, which can strike through material objects, and give to them thereafter a sacredness.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE comes largely through the strokes of suffering. And suffering is a hard schoolmaster — with mercy often, but it is a schoolmaster; and a man who has suffered a great deal can not be ignorant of himself, especially if his suffering be of the higher forms.

Nor is it possible for one to have suffering without finding out some way to bear it. The object of suffering is to give equipoise and discipline to the

mind; and you can not suffer much without gaining, as I might say, that proportion and balance of things on which the strength of manhood depends.

THE gardener knows that where he puts the knife, there will follow the fruit. And blessed are they whom the heavenly husbandman prunes, if, when he cuts, there is a bud behind the knife.

As at night storms howl in the sky, and torment the sea, and run riot every whither, without a master, so men seem to think it is in this world, and that blood, and groans, and sighs, and bereavements, and every form of mischief, fill the world full, and that there is no God, or that, if there is, he hides himself, and does not govern the world. But stop! There is not a drop of the water in the midnight storm of the sea which seems to be given over to misrule, that is not controlled by law, and does not act accordingly. And the wild caprice of night on the sea is as much under law as the formation of the crystal, or the growth of the fruit, or the development of any other influences upon the land. It is ordered of God; and though to our look the history of the human race and the history of the world

has been one great unregulated whirl of manifold suffering, without direction and almost without profit, yet, after all, I think we may join Paul in his magnificent chant, and say, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

SUFFERING may be a rod to chastise. It may be a scepter to empower.

All suffering is in the hands of the Sufferer. It is a dispensation, made up of many parts; and it is mysterious because we know only a part of it. We see only in part. We shall not know as we are known until by and by. But, after all, we are told that God presides over nature, and over providence, and over grace, as a loving Father; and Jesus Christ, the Sufferer, who gave himself rather than that men should die, stands up to intercede for us; and the Holy Spirit is set forth as the almighty and ineffable benefactor. We are carrying on our life under the presiding counsels of a God who knows what suffering is good for, and what it can do. There is a Heart of the universe that is warm with love, and that beats above you with infinite sympathy. You have not a God who has no impulse to praise. And even when he blames, he comforts and consoles you as no mother ever comforted and consoled her weeping child — if you will.

THE difficulties, trials, and temptations of every kind in this mortal life, really drive us up into the higher elements of our nature, practice us in them, make us more sanctified men, veterans as distinguished from militia untried in the field, old men of wisdom and experience as compared with young men just coming into the trial of life.

THERE are many men who by trouble are very soon made faint, so that they are disposed to give up. When a ship is driven on the shore, and the thundering sea is rushing in, both to break up the ship and to devour its passengers, you shall see a mother and a babe thrown over together into the sea. She clasps it, and yet feebly attempts to sustain herself for the child's sake, that she may be washed ashore; but the little babe is weak, and gives a gasp, and is gone. It had no power in it. And the mother's hand wavers more and more aimlessly, and she sinks, and is gone. Peaceful it was and short. But near by is some sturdy one whose wife and children are at home awaiting him; and he has the vigor of strength in him, and perish he will not. Though he has already touched the sand beneath, a beggarly, hungry wave wafts him back again, and his strength is well-nigh gone. But he is not discouraged: he holds on, and another wave throws him up, and he is safe.

"Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Is that, then, the result of patience? Is that homely quality so wonderful as to be praised in that way, that all your trials work faith, and faith works patience, and patience makes the perfect man? Is patience the sign of perfection in a man? Why, as compared with many other great qualities that we seek after, patience seems to be very plain, low, and comparatively negative. It looks to men as if it were a mere holding-on. Courage is brilliant, ready to meet and resist, to put on the whole armor of God, and go forth to battle and overcome, or, being set upon vehemently, to be able to withstand a blow. There is something rather splendid and lustrous in that. There is a heroism in it. But patience — what is there in that? Yet it is really the quality by which a man holds himself equal to his circumstances. It is that supreme quality by which a man reins in his forces, keeps himself willingly where God, by his providence, allots him, and is superior to his circumstances; where he has that consideration for himself, as a child of God and an heir of immortality, that no condition upon earth can daunt him.

MANY of our troubles are like snow, which, starting snow, becomes rain before it meets the ground.

And as the snowdrop becomes the raindrop, and the raindrop becomes the juice of fruits and flowers, so our troubles, though they fall cold on the branch, melt, and carry sap to the root. Continued troubles are not, therefore, evidences of God's displeasure.

"MAY not I cry, then?" Yes, just as the night does, and in the morning it is dew. There is not a flower that does not look sweeter for it. True tears make souls beautiful. True sorrows are, after all, but the seeds out of which come fairer joys.

WE need a trust that shall take hold upon God with such a large belief of his love and constancy as shall carry us right on over rough as well as over smooth ground; through light and darkness; through sickness, bereavement, loss, trouble, and long-pressing afflictions. At noon we need not a torch: it is in darkness that one should carry a light.

TAKING the average of men's lives, they suffer more from things that never happen than from things that do happen. How many times in summer has that black cloud which was full of mighty storms, and which came rising, and opening, and

swinging through the air, gone by without a drop of rain from it! It was a wind-cloud. And how many times have there been clouds rolled up in men's heaven, which have apparently been full of bolts of trouble, but which have not had a trouble in them! Yet when they are gone, men forget to learn any wisdom.

To some, suffering comes only to make them howl and cry and whine, and ask to know how to get rid of it. Put the saddle of patience on your back, and say to suffering, "Mount and ride me;" and take the bit in your mouth, and be "exercised." Be broken. Be trained. Be disciplined. Go through the drill. Bear your suffering till you know that you are master of it, as at first it was the master of you.

So suffer that it shall make you a benefactor of the great throng of sufferers that are round about you. So suffer that it shall bring you into sympathy and personal alliance with God. So suffer that you shall rejoice that you are made conformable unto his death and his sufferings.

SUFFER as the vine does. The cutting-off of the branch by the pruner's knife is not lost strength.

The vine says, "If I may not grow in that direction, I will grow in some other direction." And so it pours new blood into the cluster, and more sugar goes to each grape. And God prunes those that he loves, that they may bring forth more and better fruit.

Is God dealing with you? Do not do as Paul did, even. Do not pray thrice that the suffering may be removed. Do not ask to have the pain taken away. Say, "Lord, teach me how to use my suffering for thy glory. Teach me patience. Teach me faith. Teach me how to see what I never should have seen but for these trials. Bring me nearer home. Make me more, inwardly, than I have been, and I care not for the outward experience."

Full blessed are they that are called, and that have this sign: *Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

If you do not suffer in any of the forms of affliction which are incident to the divine economy in this world, God says that you are not sons.

Oh, the cleansing of suffering! God grant that we may have the cleansing, and not the baptism alone.

FROM PRAYERS.

WE beseech of thee, O Lord God! that thou wilt comfort those who are most needy of comfort. Look after those that are most perplexed, after those that are harrowed by care, and after those that suffer anxiety. Look after those, we beseech of thee, to strengthen them, upon whom the yoke bears hard, and the burden presses with downward weight.

WE pray that thou wilt comfort those upon whom sudden and strange afflictions have fallen, and whose souls are bewildered. Grant that they may stay themselves upon God, and find relief from their fears. If any seem tempest-tossed, and know not where to go for comfort, may they take refuge in God, and find in him that rest which they can not find in this sin-shaken world.

MAY we be able evermore to have this confidence, that God is our friend; and that life itself, with all its experiences, though we may not see it now, is our friend; and that we are ripening and preparing for the ministration of suffering as well as for joy, — for that rest which remaineth for the people of God. And may we know how

to extract joy from suffering. So we beseech of thee that we may be taught of God. And we pray that thou wilt, out of our sorrows and sufferings, have it given to us to comfort those who are in like affliction. May we know how to go about doing good, and fulfill the law of our God in our example.

ARE any sick? Yet what is sickness but God's medicine? We beseech thee that thou wilt cheer and comfort any that are languishing: give them visions of that far-coming land. And may all of us count ourselves strangers in this world, there only at home where we rest with God.

MAY we attempt to make suffering light for other persons, and increase their joy. So may we live in sympathy with them. And at last may we be brought where thou art, to see thee no more through a glass, darkly, but to see thee as thou art, to be like thee, and to be with thee for ever.

WE rejoice thus that thou art the harbor of our souls, and that all things do bring us near to thee, that pain itself is thy messenger, and that joy, too, is of thee, a ministering angel. And as the light and the darkness alike do serve us in this world, so sorrow and gladness alike, twin-born of thee, but nurses for us, are serving us in daily need and our inward life.

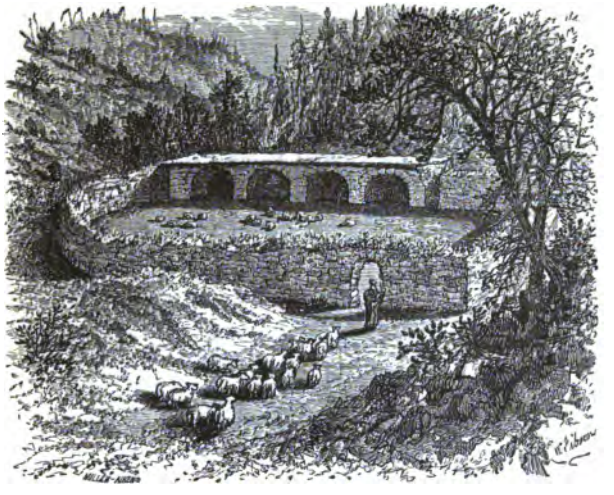
THOU art gradually molding us in thine own image; and erelong the molding season will pass away, and we shall come forth from the shop and from the furnace burnished and brightened, and shall appear in Zion and before God.

IN the night it seems as though it would never be day to the weary and the sick; but when the morning comes, the night is forgotten. So in our troubles, while yet the cross and the burden are upon us, we often are weary and cast down; but when time has brought thy help, we find that we are stronger for the cross and better for the burden. Thy yoke is easy and thy burden is light to those who learn to bear them.

There is a land where the sun neither rises nor sets, nor divides time, but shines dimless and eternal.

O, to dwell where there is neither summer nor winter; to dwell where the trees and the flowers do not come to beauty and fruit-bearing at long intervals; to dwell where no one misunderstands; to dwell where all are serene in activity and full of power, and never err by excess: where all are harmonized and made symmetrical!

Lord, grant that we may enter with all our hearts into this perfectness, that its vision may be with us; that we may all endure such cross-bearing and such self-denial as shall bring about in us, some day or other, whatever is Godlike, pure, just, true, and of good report. Grant that we may in this mortal life begin to weave those garments which we shall wear in the eternal sphere.



VI.

Thy Will be done.

"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." — Ps. xxiii : 2.

Let every man who finds himself environed by difficulties, imprisoned by sorrows, in any way hedged in by threatening disaster, have faith that God can

open a way out of those difficulties which human reason would not expect and could not invent. While we should not relax thought and endeavor, there is a wisdom higher than our thought or our endeavor.

Therefore trust in the Lord. Let all your troubles and all your joys go up in prayer before God; and wherever it pleases God to give you release, be sure that his angels will find you out, and that, if you are in prison, no doors can lock them out. The first door and the second will open, and the sentinel will give way, when God sends his messenger to give release to those who love him and trust him.

I HAVE stood upon Mount Holyoke when I heard the thunder below; and I have seen men traveling up the side, and making haste to get out of the storm. I, standing higher than they, escaped both the rain, the wind, and the pelting thunder; and they, going up through the storm, got on the top, and were also free from it. Many, many storms there are that lie low, and hug the ground; and the way to escape them is to go up the mountain side, and get higher than they are.

IT is not by having trials removed from us, but by having our souls strengthened and lifted up, that

they cease to be such trials as they were. When your child, being sick, is apparently going to be blind all through life, and you pray with all your soul that the child may be rescued from it, saying to the Lord, "I will praise thy name forevermore: only give me this blessing," God gives the blessing of patience and resignation in such a degree that when the child goes blind, and is to be helpless on your hands all its life, you are lifted above sorrow in the resignation, and in the trust, and in the consciousness, that God has done well by the child and by yourself. That is a larger manhood than it is to rejoice because the sorrow has gone away.

LOOKING forward is not wrong, but a *painful* forelooking is. Pain and sorrow in a moderate degree are salutary, but they must be derived from the present. The past belongs to gratitude and regret, the present to contentment and work, the future to hope and trust.

IF a man has nothing but what grows in this life, you can make him poor and unhappy; but if a man believes in God, and believes in heaven, and believes in the joy that awaits him there, — if all the things that are said in the New Testament are real to him, — how are you going to bankrupt him? How are you

going to overthrow so lordly a spirit as his who has heard God say, "Thou art my son"? Son of God? Yes, prince. Heir with Christ to all things? For ever and for ever heir. How is any sudden trouble to run in upon him? In the full consciousness of his estate, in the joy and dignity of his relationship, how shall any man harm him?

In proportion as you are called in the presence of God to suffer, may you have grace given you to stand up under suffering, and to show to men what Christ's likeness is in every exigency of life, — in old age, in days of infirmity, in poverty, in griefs, — involving you in every thing which belongs to human experience. Stand calm, capable of enduring the conditions around you; stand in the manhood of Jesus Christ; put on the whole armor of God; and, having done all, *stand*.

Shall a child cry when the mother takes it up at night out of a frightful dream? No. The child seeks its mother's bosom, and is at rest. Shall God's great arm be round about you, and shall the bosom of unfailing love be your supply, and shall you go moaning and crying as if you were orphans and were neglected? Oh, let the light of Christ's love, the joy of his presence, the opening of the

heavens so that you shall see him as he is, redeem you from anxious care!

ALL ye that are suffering, look up! Suffering comes not from the ground. Affliction does not spring from the dust. You are walking on the King's highway. You are walking after the steps of your Master, who was made perfect through suffering to be a Captain of salvation to those who come after him. Be good; serve in goodness. Wait; be patient.

THERE is no such perfect rest or peace as that which comes to men when all parts of their nature, in proper relations to each other, are lifted to the highest possible tension. The indwelling of God does not produce the quietude of insensibility or of indifference, but it produces that peace which comes from courage and hope and aspiration, calm and intense.

BLESSED are those persons into whose presence we go rejoicing, and out of whose presence we come still more joyful. It is the quality of God's soul, when it comes down into ours, to fill it with peace, — that peace "which passeth all understanding." Perfect harmony, that is the peace which God brings

to us when he comes into our souls. And oh how full of hope and comfort is this view!

I HAVE talked with old colored men, who, storm-driven, have gone to God, because they had nothing else to go to, and who had a richness and wonderfulness of experience that I had no parallel to in myself, though I was a preacher, and my business was to study. A God that you have *studied* out can never be such a God as you have *felt* out.

SPEAK, mothers who have been sustained in the midst of troubles that rasped the soul to the very quick; who have been upborne under trials that seemed likely to break down heart and body. Testify that nothing but Christ's presence kept you, and that that did keep you in perfect peace. There are bereaved hearts and weeping eyes innumerable that need the refuge which you have found.

THERE is such a thing as the intersphering of human souls and the Divine Soul. We are taught that there is such a thing as the life of God in the life of man, or that man's life is intersphered by or caught up into the soul of God.

CONFIDENCE in God's providence, faith in special, daily, minute, and particular providence, carries a man almost without thought through life. It is the spring that is interposed between the jolt and the rider in a carriage. Faith in divine providence in human affairs lifts a man up above all imaginary troubles, and relieves him largely from the jar of all real troubles.

IN a sad hour I have seen, through the window, mounted on a rail back of my house, one of these curious-eyed little sparrows. And he was a better preacher to me than I am to you. It was winter, and there was not guaranteed to it one day's food, nor any protection, from any source in this world. It was wholly dependent upon its God. And yet it sang, — sang for its own hearing, and sang for my rebuke, saying to me, "Are ye not much more than I? and God thinks of me, and takes care of me." How much there is in the voice of nature if we only knew how to interpret it!

MEN feel that the attempt to carry the minutiæ of our lives into the presence of our God would be preposterous. Nay: because he is God, he is able to take in the universal love of God. The minutest things are known to him. The very hairs of your

head are numbered. And not one of the sparrows that hop and leap on the leafless boughs of the trees about your house shall fall without God's knowing it. But are ye not more valuable than many sparrows?

MEN'S strength in life is not in their wisdom and potency. The strength of men lies in the massive strength of Jehovah. It is in the providence of God. It is in the presence of God. It is the conscious love of God in the human soul that makes a man strong and invincible.

PAUL'S sufferings were manifest and very visible, and as such belonged to him and to all the human race in common, yet only in him in overmeasure; and in him they fell also upon a more sensitive nerve than men ordinarily possess. He threw himself thus upon the thought of the great goodness of God. He said substantially to himself, "I am my Lord's, and he overrules all things for the furtherance of his own cause. If he, therefore, thinks best that I should suffer, I rejoice to fulfill his will."

IF you were to chase each particular care, and each particular fret, and each particular sorrow, you

would have business on hand for the rest of your life; but if you can rise into a higher state of mind, these cease to be annoyances and cares. Ninety-nine parts in a hundred of the cares of life are cured by one single salve, and that is "Thy will be done." The moment a man can say that, and let go, that moment more than ninety-nine parts in a hundred of his troubles drop away.

THERE is a time when the firmest hopes grow insecure, when the sweetest pleasures cease any longer to please. Have you made any provision for that hour? Is there between your souls and Christ's a sacred union? Do you now call him your Father and your Saviour? Have you laid your head upon his heart? Have you laid yourself in the arms of his love by the confidence of your faith, so that you are a child of God? God grant that it may be our lot to have this hope of God as an anchor sure and steadfast.

I REMEMBER once being called to see a sick girl, who was, perhaps, seventeen or eighteen years of age. A gentleman informed me that she had been sick for twelve months, and that she had become quite disconsolate. He said, "She has the sweetest disposition, and she is the most patient creature im-

aginable. And you ought to hear her talk: one can hardly tell whether she talks or prays. It is heaven to go into her room." I wanted a little more of the spirit of heaven, so I went to see her: I was engaged in the special labors of a revival of religion at the time.

She said, "I hear of what you are doing, and of what my companions are doing, and I long to go out and labor for Christ; and it seems very strange to me that God keeps me here on this sick-bed." "My dear child," said I, "do you not know that you are preaching Christ to this whole household, and to every one that knows you? Your gentleness and patience and Christian example are known and read by all. You are laboring for Christ more effectually than you could anywhere else." Her face brightened; she looked up without a word; and doubtless she gave thanks to God, and angels sang more sweetly than before.

THERE are many people that have storms, but there are very few who know how to put rainbows over them.

AFFLICTION, like the blackness of the night, is indispensable to the out-shining of the stars.

FROM PRAYERS.

WE thank thee that thou hast made all thought and all feeling sacred through the suffering of thy Son, our Saviour, and through the revelations of suffering in his apostles and servants; and we thank thee that there are many of thy people and saints upon earth whose sufferings are comforted, and that the voice of crying goes forth to those that cry, and that the voice of victory in the midst of suffering goes forth to them that are as yet speechless in their trouble. Grant to each of us the heroism of a true Christian sympathy in love, in suffering, in fidelity, in all pain, in every thing.

WE have not shed one tear too many, nor had one affliction too many. The burden has never been too heavy. The cross has never been cruel to us. Thou hast done wisely with us. The very digging that seemed to be rending us was the digging of the wells of the soul in our experience. The very things that we protested against and strove against have been overruled for our good: and we bear witness, that though for the present, affliction has not been joyous to us, but grievous, afterwards it has worked the peaceable fruit of righteousness, in that we

have been exercised thereby; and we commit ourselves to thee for the future.

We pray that we may be able to lift ourselves so into the confidence of love that we shall ride over all the tribulations of the world, and outsail the storm.

We pray that thou wilt be gracious to any of those who are in perplexity and trouble, and do not know the way of duty. Help them to have such faith in thee and in thy providence that they may not carry their own cares. May they not be willing to grieve thee who hast told them to cast their burdens upon thee, and to trust in thee. May they learn trust and patience and hope.

O Lord! we thank thee that there are more smiles in the universe than tears; that there is more rest than trouble; that there is more love than hatred.

We thank thee, our Father, for the innumerable mercies of our lives, more than we know, more than we think of. Day by day we have mercies visible, recognized; day by day mercies invisible and unknown, — protection where we know of no danger, rescue when peril was near, friendship and love, — all the things which have come to us from day to day; above all, that rest which they have who trust in thee, and who believe that thy providence is

over all thy work, and that thou art preparing for us a better home.

OUR heavenly Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant the light of consolation and joy and comfort to all those thy followers that are seeking, through the twilight and through the darkness, to find thee. How great is that darkness to some! How many are there that say, "All thy waves have gone over me. My God, my God! dost thou care for me?" Thou dost care for the poor and struggling soul. Thou knowest how hard the conflict is with those that are, by sickness and poverty, and ten thousand grating influences of life, made wretched. Thou art sorry for them, and thou art sending them sweet angelic influences; and if they will, thou wilt carry them through the desert, and they shall even see the promised land. Great is the power of thy grace over against our weakness and want.

GRANT unto them the vision of a God so merciful that all their wants shall seem to be supplied before they mention them. Thou knowest the inmost thought, thou knowest what we know not, — the remotest necessities, — of our souls; and what can be better for us than to rest with unspoken requisitions before the God who created us, who knows us, who loves us, who gave himself for us? So may we be able, day by day, to live in sweet contentment, and rest in thee.

WE questioned thee, questioned the wisdom of all thy ways. And we so disturbed ourselves, and disquieted our spirits within us, that we had no more in God, but walked in the solitude of our own orphanage. Then, O God! thou hast had mercy upon us; and we have been as children that wandered in the darkness, in the woods, and alone. And we have been found of thee, — we, that could not find thee. Thou hast shone again, we know not how. We love thee because thou hast loved us, and we found thee because we were found of thee.

THOU who art the lover of the sparrow, and art grieved to see it fall, are we not better than many sparrows? Fold us to thy heart, and grant that we may have communicated to us the consciousness of it. Oh, how poor we are in ourselves! Oh, how rich we might be in thee! Rain down upon us the light of God. Pour from thyself streams of light, and life, and joy in the Holy Ghost. And bring us at last, amid tears, beyond sighing and sorrow, beyond sinning, into the land of rest.

O, may we find a resting place at last from which no one shall go out, where all shall be real and joy-bearing and perfect, eternal in its perfectness.

VII.

The Victory that Overcometh.

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."—2 Tim. ii:12.

The probability is, in my judgment, that, amongst the deaths to be met in this world, there are few more painless than that which martyrs suffer at the stake, although our senses are shocked at the idea

of such a death. They sing, they pray; and often the testimony of the crowd round about them is, that they have such irradiations, such expressions on their faces, that people imagine that angels are become visible. It illustrates the power of the soul to redeem even the physical sufferings of the body. How much more, if this elevation of the soul be trained, can it dominate exterior troubles, anxieties, cares, bereavements, sorrows! Day by day, and hour by hour, men may meet their difficulties, and, even if they do not overcome them, so rise above them that they cease to be annoyances; and hour by hour every day one may sing the psalm, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul! for God hath dealt bountifully with thee."

When the tide has been coming in, I have often seen how it chafed and fretted, running into some narrow-mouthed bay, filling it, swirling round, and lapping up on the shores, till by and by, still flowing, and flowing, and flowing, it filled the bay full. The tide had spent itself: there ran a smoothing ripple all over the surface, and the whole bay at last was at rest. And so the soul, while yet it is being filled, is disturbed by ripples and eddies; but by and by, when it shall have been filled full of the power and presence of God, it will be satisfied, and will be perfectly at peace, and will be full of joy.

THE victorious issue of tried souls is a comfort to those who are in the trial. When on a hard-fought field the shout goes up on either wing, those that are in the center and are well-nigh overcome, hearing it, know that there is victory on some part of the field, and take courage, and redouble their blows, and press forward. Oftentimes the comfort that comes from seeing others victorious, brings victory to us.

WE see it to be one of the most important qualities, as it works for manhood, to have this conception of ourselves as superior, by the grace of God, to all the accidents and conditions of this mortal life. Are griefs oppressive? "By the grace of God I am able to bear grief," saith the Christian hero. "I am a prince. I am not beholden to time. I am God's uncrowned child, hastening for my crown; I am God's heir hastening for my estate; and am I to sit down under annoyance, and to weep and mourn?"

Now, there ought to be the spirit of interpretation or of knowledge among men; so that, while they are going into suffering, while yet they are under its rain, and while its hail pelts them, they shall be enabled to say, "I rejoice."

We are not the first men who have been on God's forge. He has had thousands on his anvil before. He knows the infliction of every instrument, and how to temper every blow. It is the same blessed God that is workman still. And when I look upon the virtues of old saints, and the victories that are occurring now from day to day, I am comforted and cheered.

As discords resolve themselves into the sweetest harmonies, as the impetuous roar of dashing music gives to the silence during the pauses a magical charm, so we see in the actual experiences of human life that those sorrows which are hardest to bear carry with them wings of joy; so that, though the soul may fly in a clouded atmosphere, it flies singing, and rises higher and higher towards the cloudless land. Therefore suffering in all the higher forms in this life is joy as well as suffering.

It is not always that we are taken into the rest of God through Jesus Christ by the removal of the things that trouble us. The apostle Paul records the fact, — and it is one of the most striking of experiences, — that, lest he should be lifted up by the abundance of the revelations given to him, there was sent unto him a thorn in the flesh. No matter what

it was, it was a trouble, a great sorrow to him. He besought the Lord thrice that it might be removed; but the Lord said, "My grace shall be sufficient for you. I will uphold you, so that you can bear that thorn, whatever may be your trouble." He did. He lifted him so high in time that Paul declared that he rejoiced in infirmities and in trials. They became a subject and source of actual joy to him.

After the storm has brooded all day long, and hung low, so that the clouds shut out all forms, and there was but gray and haze, you have often seen the wind shift, and roll away the clouds, and the clouds bank themselves up and sweep out, so that at last the sun, toward sunset, struck them at the proper angle, and all that had been so dark and gloomy through the day began to light itself up, and stood like a heavenly portal glowing wide, and the glories began to flash out on those banks that now had lifted themselves up into the very brightness of heaven. And yet it was the same thing that at one time made the darkness, and at another time seemed to be the glory of heaven itself.

The sorrows and trials and mischiefs of this world are dark enough in the passing and in the brooding; but the time is coming when the light of God's countenance shall be so let in upon them that they shall be marvels and magnitudes of glory and of beauty.

THE blossoms are not always on the tops of the trees. They are sometimes on the branches that are down near the ground. I have seen aunts, I have seen maiden sisters, I have seen plain sewing-women, I have seen the lowest in poverty, who stood with such erect, sweet, pure heavenly-mindedness, that it was worth a man's while to go and look at them, to renew his own faith in himself. Men are frequently comforted and cheered by the exemplary lives of those who are quietly living in Christ Jesus.

Is there anybody who enjoys as much as I do the little children on the street? They are a perpetual anthem to me. I thank God every growing year of my life that there is so much that is sweet and beautiful in childhood. They come to me like so many songs. And it is not that they are my own or my neighbors' children, but that they are God's children. The street is full of them, and no picture that was ever painted is so beautiful to me as the scene which they present. And when they have passed from childhood to youth, my interest in them is not abated. It is a joyous spectacle to see their growth and development toward manhood and womanhood. And is there any one who sees them when they walk to the altar to take upon them the vows of the marriage-hour, without feeling an inexpressible sympathy for them? Not when I lay persons in the grave,

and say the last words of love over them, is my heart touched as much as when I pronounce a benediction on those who are starting in life. And yet neither children, nor youth, nor those who are entering upon the full flush of manly joy, are to me half so beautiful as are those revered persons whose faces are seamed and marked with care, and who have come out sweet-eyed, having gone through suffering. When persons have grown up, and married, and become parents, and lost their children, or borne with the long infirmities and crimes of their children, and had the weight of life come crushingly upon them, but have yet risen in the divine strength above their troubles, and stand with their sufferings registered in lines upon their forehead, in those lips which have lost their fullness and pristine beauty, and in their gray hairs, with a noble halo surrounding them in their old age, — what can be more beautiful than their hope and sweet serenity? It makes us wonder that the angels do not take them home. Such persons constitute to me the highest ideal of earthly beauty. And they furnish an example of what suffering does if it is only allowed to have its perfect work, according to the economy by which it is administered in the divine system.

One may enter heaven as a king, crowned; another enters "so as by fire."

FROM PRAYERS.

FROM the great invisible world that broods us may we be able to put to silence the noise of this life; and from out of its abundance may we be able to supply the lack of this life, and live by the soul and the spirit. Even if the ministrations of the body are shrunk away, yea, even if we are cast down and tormented to the point of death, may we triumph through Him that ever liveth, and who is our life.

MAY we be filled on the way, not with sorrow alone, but with those joys which are born of sorrow. And while we sigh, and are sad, may there spring to our lips many and many a song of triumph. May we pluck beforehand, from the branches, that fruit which hath in it eternal life; and may we joy in each other, and bear one another's burdens, and pray for one another, and forgive one another, and in all things be to each other what the dear Jesus was to his disciples when he companioned with them on earth.

O LORD! why should we be discrowned, and our scepter broken, and our garments despoiled, when we are kings and priests? Grant that we may reach up our

thoughts day by day to the higher sphere, and walk not as other men walk, and suffer not as they suffer, and be divided not as they are divided. May we walk in the greatness of thy strength, and rejoice evermore in the Lord; and may men that behold us see in us peace and joy, though others may be tempest-tossed and not comforted.

WE pray that thou wilt make us strong in the day of adversity, and able to *bear*. May we be clad in all the armor of God, both offensive and defensive, and be prepared to meet every exigency, and yet not be overthrown,—to be found still standing when the battle is over, and able to *stand*.

O LORD! open the eyes of those who are suffering. May they see the heavens filled with the angels and chariots of God. May they feel that more are they that are for them than they that are against them. In every hour of trouble may they know how to find rescue. May they find comfort in the presence and sympathy and power and promises of Jesus Christ. In the hope of victory, in the certainty of life and immortality beyond, may they find strength and consolation.

As in the far distant lands north, when winter has drearily held in bondage the long and dark days, at last the sun begins to come and shine dimly, and then shows itself a little above the horizon, and then stands full risen with healing in his beams; so we have been locked fast

in our frigid fears, and have seemed to be in an eternal night, until the dawn of knowledge, at first but little, and then with growing and growing light, as of a star, and finally as of the sun which swallowed up the stars, has come to us. The Sun of righteousness has come to us with healing in his beams. So light our way, O blessed Saviour! until the end doth come; and then may we find each other in immortality and glory.

Our years are moving. The shadows are falling far to the eastward. Grant that we may rejoice to know that we must work while the day lasteth. May we put more energy and more influence—the whole of ourselves into all that remains to do, so that when we are called away we may not find duties neglected throwing their gloom of sadness upon our couch. May there be no unsatisfied quarrels, nor malignant evils that have sprung from us. O, let there be not a memory or a pang of regret for these things. May we do our duty now, to-day. May we be always watching, waiting, and ready, with our loins girded up and our lamps trimmed and burning, and with oil at hand, so that when the cry comes—the cry that men do not hear from without, and that no one fails at last to hear within—"The bridegroom cometh," we may spring up with great joy, and go out to meet him.

VIII.

Yet a Little While.

"I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. — JOHN xiv : 3.

LIFE is but a hand-breadth. Each year is not so much as the bead that the beauty wears about her neck. A cloud no bigger than a man's hand is

swelling, and filling the whole heaven. What then? To-day its bolts may smite you, but to-morrow you will be in heaven. Your children have died and gone home. But what of that? Soon you will follow them. The glorious future is almost yours.

THERE is no thought in which with more joy men bathe their fevered brow than the thought, "Erelong I shall die; I shall go forth from this struggle, from this strife of tongues, from this bitterness, from this injustice, from this partial life. It will be but a little while before I shall go forth, and be at rest."

How beautiful it is to see a man or a woman who has come to the state of ripe patience; the serene face of the matron on whom all sweetness and goodness wait, who is living just at the golden sunset of her life, and who has been through trials and sorrows unnamed, — for the greatest sorrows of this life never come to the surface, — broken-hearted almost, yet, by her faith in God, enduring till one and another thing is removed, and her life at last is completed, and she stands in the golden light waiting! How beautiful is the serenity of victorious age that has not been overthrown, that has gone through the rugged way, and across Jordan into the promised land!

Go on, dear brethren. Many of you are nearer home than you think. A step more, and you shall rest. Many of you, though far away yet, are under a safe convoy. Press forward: let nothing discourage you. Though your attainments may be small, and though your sins may be many, remember that you are Christ's, not because you are good, but because you are to be developed into goodness by him. Trust him, follow him.

You are not far from the host that waits for you. It can not be long before your sorrows shall end, and your eternal joy begin. Then, be patient. Is the storm fierce? Yet it is almost past, and the time of the singing of birds is at hand.

Look up, look away, a little! Forget the things which sound in your ears from day to day, and bring yourself into that glorious atmosphere in which you shall see that which is not to be seen by the natural eye, that which is beyond your reach, that you may have a foretaste of that rest which remaineth for the people of God.

I have seen the poverty-smitten widow full of pain. She had very little outwardly, but she could

lift the song at midnight. As the apostles sang down in their prison, and brought angels to their rescue, so I have known imprisoned souls that were large in their inward manhood sing heaven down to them, and allure angels to be their convoy.

To think that almost within the reach of the arm, separated from us by scarcely a hand's-breadth, is a realm where all goodness springs up spontaneously, and without obstruction; where all the body's hinderances, as well as helps, shall be laid aside; where aches, and pains, and losses, and troubles shall be unknown; where lower temptations which take hold of us through the portals of the flesh shall be done away; and where every thing that is gracious, and pure, and true, and beautiful in manhood shall lift itself up as the plants in the tropics lift themselves toward the sun, that "mortality might be swallowed up of life,"—to think of this is enough to wean one from the world. Who that does think of it, does not long for the world to come?

O CHILDREN of the living God, my Father's children, my brothers and sisters, heirs with me to an eternal inheritance! let us take hold of hands to-day, with a new covenant, with new sweetness of love and joy, and begin to live for the heavenly land.

FROM PRAYERS.

GRANT, O Lord! that our varied experiences from day to day may prepare us for that higher life which impends over us. May we not shrink from it. May we labor so that we shall be accepted of God at whatever hour this life may end. May we not count it dear, nor seek to prolong it, nor dread its termination. May we listen for thy call. As men wait and watch for the morning through the weariness of the hours of the night, so may it be given us to long for our rest, — to be homesick for heaven.

THE way is steep, the path is narrow, the conflict of life is severe. And how tired our feet are! How weary our eyes become! We need that rest which thou hast in thyself. Thou art at eternal labor and eternal ease. Thou sittest rejoicing, thyself calm, sending forth the storm, and rebuking and laying it low. Thou hast in thyself all that we need in the conflicts of life; and we desire to rise into thy presence with our thoughts, and with all the needs and inward and unspeakable wants of our soul. We desire to feel the atmosphere in which thou dost dwell, and to go away as those that have walked in the garden, and borne the very perfume of all that grows and is beautiful.

MAY we seek, out of this stormy land, the land of the unsetting sun. May our thoughts know how to fly through the space which separates between life and death. Here in the death-land we begin to live: there, living, we shall be as thou art, O loving Father!

WE pray for all those who are bestead with poverty, with disappointment, with overthrow, with all the ills that belong to the struggle of life. Wilt thou be with them to constantly open the horizon beyond, that they may not look down and drudge; that they may not feel themselves to be like beasts of burden, weary on the road, and longing for the night to come! Grant that they may evermore see before them that realm where dwells eternal summer, whither they are speeding, and where all of us erelong shall lift up ransomed souls, and spread wings of faith, and for ever live above care and sorrow and trouble. So shed upon us the light of the other life that this life shall be bearable to the sons of misfortune.

OUR years are moving. The shadows are falling far to the eastward. Grant that we may rejoice to know that we must work while the day lasteth.

MAY hope of our redemption, immortality, and glory in the heavenly land, through the Lord Jesus Christ, hang over us as a guiding star. May it be to us as the gate of heaven. And though at times it may be hid for a little

while, erelong may it break through every cloud and storm, to cheer and comfort us.

MAY we all rejoice as we talk by the way of the glory that is soon to break upon us; and though we be weary of the way and of the burden, may we be patient. May we be willing to live, — yea, if need be, to suffer, — that thus the will of the Lord may be done in us. And so grant, we beseech thee, that we may cling by faith to thee and the truths of thy word, that, when the message comes, we may not be abashed, nor set about gathering together our garments, nor seek oil for our lamps. May our loins be girded about, and our lamps trimmed and burning; and may we go forth eagerly to meet the Bridegroom.

MAY we have a strong hold upon the life which is to come. May we refuse to give up hope in the promised peace.

While earthly things pass, and the beauty thereof be changed, and all is vanity around about us, may the glories of heaven never fade, and may there be no change there to our thought, except from glory to glory, until we are permitted — whether triumphant or as weary pilgrims, whether as victors or as those overborne — to enter in, and our lightest call at the gate bring forth thine angels of welcome.

O THOU that didst command the morning to come forth from the night again, shine upon these dark and troubled

souls. May they find their way to thee, and, bearing tears, come away with songs. Grant, we pray thee, that there may be many who shall look from their trouble to that great joy and peace which thou hast for all troubled souls.

MAY we become hopeful and loving, knowing that the time can not be far away, but that the gate is already ajar, and is soon to be opened. It is opened for one and another; and they fly thither from the winter storm, and are safe. Already come within sight of it, almost within sound of the joys behind the gate, grant that we may be content. Thou that bearest up the universe, may we lean upon thee wholly. May we cast our burdens and our cares upon thee, and walk careless, since God cares for us.

THERE are hours of vision given, hours of glory, hours when the whole earth seems to us illuminated by thy presence, and joy overflows, and it seems to us as though we should be called to abide thus upon the Mount of Transfiguration for ever. And there come to us also hours of darkness and trouble, when we fain would lay down the burden of life, and go forth. And at times, then, thou dost permit us by faith to rise beyond the sight of mortal things, and to enter into the gate, and to walk among the spirits of the blessed, and to know something of its joy and of its transport.

THERE is a land where no revolutions roll, on whose

shore no storm bursts, where sadness is unknown, and tears are wiped away for ever. To that we aspire. We desire to earnestly seek after it, and more earnestly than for any other thing, and to seek after it by having in ourselves that temper and those dispositions that shall make us like God, and make it possible for us to dwell together in harmony and peace.

BRINGING us thus from day to day, and from year to year, at last may we see the clouds breaking, and the light coming, and the glory of the Lord filling the whole horizon, until we rise from glory to glory, and enter into thy home and our home, and rejoice for ever with thee.

MAY we bless God for all the fruit, and all the flowers that bloom or hang by the way, tempting our necessity; but may we never desire to embower ourselves on earth, as if this were good enough for our home. And may we bear about with us in our most pleasant experiences the thought of the better land; and may every joy that comes to us be but the distant sound of the heavenly bells that call us hence to the eternal city.

GRANT that every day we may so live, thinking of the future, that death shall be the most radiant of portals, urging through which we ascend to triumph and eternal victory. May it not seem to us a sad thing to grow old. As daylight begins to dawn upon our darkness, leaving

its glory there, oh, grant that there may be a deep peace, an inward joy, and that the thought of our blessed immortality may be to us as a balm in every trouble, and as light in all darkness!

We look forward, and live by faith of the better land, and of the better life, and of that better self which shall be ours when we shall be where thou art, when we shall be transformed. For now are we what yet the drops are that hang dark in the heaven, unsunned and full of storm; and then shall we be as the drops are when the sun shines upon them, as they hang upon the grass or the flower, full of glory and beauty, the storm having gone by.

As in days that are stormy the clouds do part to let us see the blue beyond, and we know that not far above the storm is the calm and the brightness; so in this life, in its disturbances and troubles, thou art letting through at times the blessed light of the serene heaven above us. Our children are safe that have gone away to thee. Our friends are safe that have died in the faith of Jesus. They walk with him, and rejoice with him, mourning more for us, if there were mourning in heaven, than we for them, — they in the plentitude of their joy, they in the greatness of renewed strength; but we still stinted, and care-marked, and weary of shoulder, that bear heavy burdens. We that despond so easily and suffer so much, — why should we mourn the departed?

As they who navigate the sea know that the land is near by the odors which come to them upon the air, so we at times have a revelation of the kingdom of God. We are carried toward it. Something in us is like it. Some strange thoughts and feelings betoken it. It is coming. Into it have gone, oh, how many! We have sent our dear and precious children there. We have sent brothers and sisters. We have sent there the companions of our life, whose going was as the desolating and the sacking of our hearts. But we have not lost them. They are but just before us, hidden by the brightness in which they dwell. And we are following after, mutely calling for our children and for our friends; and we are drawing near to them as we call.

We spend our life as a tale that is told. Already there be many whose life is as the trembling flame upon the wick. Already there be many who behold the dawn of the coming life. Be gracious to them. Grant, we pray thee, that every one of us may look upon things as they are, — upon the uncertainty of life, upon the very near presence of death, — not for sadness and gloom, but for joy and triumph. In this life how many have tossed as those that lie upon beds of sickness, all the night, through the weary hours of waiting for the morning! Behold, the morning cometh! Behold, erelong the light shall break on many eyes weary with watching, break, never to depart again, — the light of the glory of God!

IX.

Blessed are They that Mourn.

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." — JOHN xi: 25, 26.

DEATH is as sweet as flowers are. It is as blessed as bird-singing in spring is. I never hear of the

death of any one who is ready to die, that my heart does not sing like a harp. I am sorry for those that are left behind, but not for those that have gone before.

It is always a sad day to me in autumn when I see the change that comes over nature. Along in August the birds are all still, and you would think there were not any left; but, if you go out into the fields, you find them feeding in the trees, and hedges, and everywhere. By and by September comes, and they begin to gather together in groups; and anybody that knows what it means, knows that they are getting ready to go. And then come the later days of October, — the sad, the sweet, the melancholy, the deep, days of October. And the birds are less and less. And in November, high up you see the sky streaked with water-fowl going southward; and strange noises in the night, of these pilgrims of the sky, they shall hear whose ears are attuned to natural sounds. Birds in flocks, one after another, wing their way to the South. Summer is gone, and I am left behind; but they are happy. And I think I can hear them singing in all those States clear down to the Gulf. They have found where the sun is never cold. With us are frosts, but not with the bird that has migrated.

THROUGH days of weakness and anguished solici-

tude you watch the dying bed, thinking in yourself, "I can not live under this loss: I can not endure it." It comes. Under the shadow of the wings of God's angels you find darkness. But when it is all past, and the sense of God's greatness and goodness descends upon the soul, you say with infinite gratitude, "The Lord has sustained me;" and at last you will say, "My darlings are gone, my friends are gone: I am alone. Come thou, O God! and dwell with me."

God is not like foolish parents, who take the spoon of noxious medicine, and put it to the lips of the child, and say, lying, "Take it, my dear: it is sweet and good." God is like an honest parent, who says to the child, "It is very bitter, my dear; but you must take it, for it will make you feel better by and by." So it is of bereavement and of all such sufferings.

Frequently the keenest sufferings which men are called to endure in this world arise from their sympathetic relations. While love pleases, and is a source of innumerable comforts, it carries with it also the possibilities of great suffering. It is impossible that you should attach yourself to another and not be affected by his prosperity or adversity. We all do "weep with them that weep," and "re-

joice with them that do rejoice." We are so united to our friends that we can not help bearing their burdens.

If you ask me, when I stand in the garden among flowers of rare forms and colors and odors, "Why do you count them useful? what are they good for?" my reply is, "Their simple presence, the mere fact of their symmetry, exquisite color, and odor, does me good." And there are often persons of whom you can not say a great many things as to deeds, nor any thing specifically as to positive qualities of character, who yet are so made that their very being carries with it joy and pleasure. If to this be added far more, as in some lives, — if, one by one, we can call up in our memories all offices of sympathy, all ministrations of kindness, all anticipations lest others should not be served, all delicacy, all fidelity; if the life has been like music, full of concords, full of sweetness, — then there are two ways to look at it: one is to say, "I have not lost it!" another to say, "Blessed be God that I have had it so long."

The grave is but the shutting of the angel hand that keeps the treasure, and conveys it safely to the other side. As they who sail over the seas go down into the vessel, and are hid, so the grave is but the

resting-place of the dead for a little time, — not decay, not loss, not final separation in darkness.

WE are not to say, "Why did I lose such a friend?" but, "Having lost such a friend, how shall I be more a man in consequence?" Ask, "How shall I see the bright lining that is beyond the dark cloud?" In other words, study suffering through the lens of hope. Look forward, and not backward.

THERE is one word that always makes me shiver with feeling: "I shall be *satisfied*." She has inherited the meaning of that word: she is satisfied. We do not come to-day to mourn, though we shed tears. We are glad for what she has: we would not draw her from that sphere. She has heard the welcome: she has begun, in a sweeter voice than she ever knew on earth, the music that never ends. Yet is she near to us all. Imagination re-creates her image, and it hangs in the heavens to be an eternal gladness to us. We should draw near to God with thanksgiving, with supplication for our unworthiness, but with thanksgiving for the crowning mercy which has been vouchsafed to this dear child.

WE are never ripe till we have been made so by

suffering. We belong to those fruits which must be touched by frost before they leave sourness, and come to their sweetness.

THE experience of every fresh mourner is, "I knew that death was in the world, but I never thought that my beloved could die." Every one that comes to the grave says, coming, "I never thought that I should bury my heart here." Though from the beginning of the world it hath been so, yet no man learns the lesson, and every man lays out his paradise afresh, with a love that sees no change, and expects no sorrow.

From a Letter.—I can not feel, I do not feel, that —— has left us. I stand expectant, as one sometimes in summer stands waiting for a bird to begin his song again, and does not know that it has flown out of the tree. But I am conscious that I have transferred that dear and bright soul to the realms above. I do not mean precisely to heaven in the technical sense, but to every thing toward which my thoughts move. Nature to me takes hue and color from every one who has gone; and the spirit seems to have mingled in such a sense with the universe, that it presents itself from every element, wherever I may turn my thoughts, for God

took him. I do not wonder. And he is with God, and where is God not! . . . I can not talk about him. It is in silence that he seems nearest. Memory is rich. He was one who was and is more than Memory can set forth. We turn to Imagination. We see by Faith. And yet at times it is hard to send the heart, like a pilgrim, into the great invisible, and to find nothing except that which we weave out of our yearning fancy. But we are moving toward him. Every day the wheels turn faster. Our dear ones will soon stand at the gate to receive us, and we shall look back with wonder on our grief.

We are moving faster as every cord is loosed that binds us to earth, faster as every heart that we loved draws us upward. Let us rejoice. And as in autumn the very earth prepares for death as if it were its bridal, and all the sober colors of the summer take higher hues, and trees and shrubs and vines go forth to their rest wearing their most gorgeous apparel, as ending their career more brightly than they began it, so let our spirits cast off somber thoughts and sable melancholy, and clothe themselves with all the radiancy of faith, with every hue of heavenly joy. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

FROM PRAYERS.

WE beseech of thee that thou wilt bless us all, and that thou wilt bless to us all the dispensations of thy providence. Thou art taking one and another out of our midst. Thou art calling home many from among us. We thank thee for their life, for their victory, for all our faith and gladness in their joy above. How precious are they making the heavens! How many stars now, that once we saw not, are shining out! How many are there of memories! How many are there of associations! How many are there of blessed cords of love that draw our hearts thither! It is the city of our God, and our city. And forth there will come how many from the gate to greet us,—some whom we have helped; some whom we have borne and taught, and now are teaching us to fight our way to them, and so our way to heaven! Grant, O Lord! that this heavenly land may be brought very near to us. May we rejoice in its joys. May its overflow come down as the rains from the clouds upon us. May our affections spring up as the flowers after the dew. And may our hearts be glad, looking heavenward in its promises, and in our holy hopes and expectations.

BLESS those who are mourning. Sanctify their sorrow to them. Be with all those who are now watching in the

midst of fear. Be in the sick-chamber, where thy servants are with their children or friends. Be a present help in time of trouble. We pray, O Lord! that thou wilt speak in the darkness, to souls that are alarmed and distressed, comfortable words of assurance which they never could hear in the light. In the twilight and in the midnight, as well as in the rising morn, leave not thy people nor forsake them.

COMFORT, O Lord Jesus! those that are in the shadow. To those that sit in the region and shadow of death, be thou very gracious and very near. Draw near to those who are discouraged by any event and circumstance in their lives. Breathe thy peace upon all that are troubled.

WE pray that thou wilt be gracious unto any that are in bereavements, sorrowing for the loss of those who have been dear to them. Grant that their grief may not weave about all the objects of their thoughts garments of mourning. May they discern, as did those of old, angels clothed in white. And do thou lift them out of their sorrows by the cheer of the Holy Spirit.

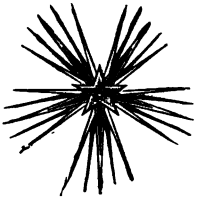
COMFORT, with a bright vision of the coming glory, those that are called to separate from earthly friends. It is but a few days. Like the weaver's shuttle, like the swift arrow, like the eagle's flight, is the passage of men through this world; and all our troubles will soon be over.

THE earth fades, and passes away. At longest we are here but a little while. Then, O blessed Saviour, with what transport shall we hail the gift of immortality, and all its blessedness, with thee, with thine, with ours!

COMFORT those that are as shrubs when rains have fallen, every leaf weeping. Shake them, that every leaf may cast off its tears, and that only refreshment may come from the down-sweeping storm upon them.

IF any are discouraged or impatient, may patience have its perfect work in them. Grant that those who sit in darkness and bereavement may dry their tears. May they behold thee risen, and forevermore destroying death. Grant that every one beholding the tomb where is all left on earth of those beloved, may behold also the angels there, and hear them saying, "I know whom ye seek: he is not here, he is risen." Upward may they lift their heart, that where their treasure is, their heart may be also.

As children that are hurt are caught in the bosom of a mother's love and hushed, and scarcely know what hath comforted them, or what strange joy hath befallen them, so be pleased to fulfill that declaration that thy love and remembrance are more than a mother's, and take into the arms of divine consolation those that need thee, that they may be hushed in thy bosom, and find there that peace which passeth all understanding.



X.

O Death! where is thy Sting?

"Yea, though I walk through the valley and shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."—Ps. xxiii: 4.

BLESSED be his name! Christ is the door of death. You know that gate which is spoken of in the Apocalypse, that gate more resplendent than

ever cunning wit carved among men, — the gate of pearl, one great pearl: it is called the gate of heaven, because it is the gate of death. And yet men go wandering on the road, and wondering what the experience may be, and what the gate of issuing is. The opening of the pearly gate, — that is dying. Going out into life, — that is dying. Finding Christ, and being found of him in the moment when, the body dropping its veil from before the eye, and the spiritual sense opening, we can take hold of the great realities, and the only realities, above us, — that is dying. Christ is the door out of life. As he has been the door of faith and love in life, so he is the door of exit. The coming of the Son of man for his own, — that is death.

THEY who live near the shore of the sea know that, even in a calm, the surge moans upon the beach; and they learn to miss, if they go away from it, the solemn undertone of the great singing, sighing ocean.

So death, to the contemplative mind, is, as it were, the great other world beating on this; and the thought of it keeps in one's soul a sense of one's life, of its greatness, its reality, the consequences of it.

DYING is simple transmutation. Dying is changing form and changing condition. It is passing out from a crude into a ripe state, from a lower into a higher realm. It is the emergence from darkness into light. It is the glorification of those elements in man which ally him to God. It is the spreading of the wings that have been undeveloped before, or that have been circumscribed. It is looked upon in the word of God as release from bondage, as deliverence from prison. It is bringing men back from captivity. It is setting them in a larger sphere. It is crowning them, and giving them a scepter.

WHEN men are prepared to die, nature is as gracious to them in dying as to an apple when it is ripe, and ready to fall from the bough. The stem itself prepares, as a part of its ripeness, to let go; so that, when the least breath of wind, after the moistening by the dew in the night, shakes the apple, it falls easily to the ground.

IF one thinks wisely of death, not only will it not be a fear and a terror, but it will be a guardian angel. There is no thought sweeter to those that believe in Christ, than the thought that he will bring them from the dead, even as he was raised from the dead.

OH, to see men that have been much tried get through safely; to stand by men who feared death, and see them go into the river, to find that all fear is taken away from them; to question them as they go deeper and deeper, and hear them say, "I fear no evil;" to hear their voices after we lose them from sight; to hear the rustle of vague sounds, as of heavenly music from that exceeding throng on the other side that bear them victoriously home, — this gives comfort. Can any man stand and witness the departure of such a man from this life, and his victory over death, without feeling more faith and more courage for his own battle?

WHEN men are death-called, they are God-called; and when they are God-called, they are Christ-found. And as we have had Christ in life, we are to have him in dying. Through him we shall die valiantly. He is the blessed door of reception; and he shall stand for all those that have put their faith in him, for all those that have trusted him, in that great invisible world.

DEATH is not in itself any thing terrible as a mere physical event. Most persons die with as little pain as a child goes to sleep; and all the suffering which precedes death is so little in the majority

of instances, that, if it were all summed up, and put upon a man who is alive and well, he would be ashamed to shed a tear, or to shrink from the bearing of it. Death in and of itself is merciful.

THE figures by which death is represented in the New Testament are exquisitely beautiful. One is that of *falling asleep in Jesus.*

THE dawn of heaven after the sufferings of life must have been to her weary soul as when one wakes from a troubled dream.

BELOVED, ye are the sons of God; and when the bell strikes, and the angel, hearing the sweet sound, flies swiftly to call you to your sonship and coronation, — is that the time for tears?

DYING is like the folding of the flower. It is a gentle wind dying away. It is a tide flowing out to the depths beyond. It is a taper going out. It is a spark extinguished. It is a silent bird at twilight shooting through the sky, half rosy-lit, to its nest.

THERE is a grace of God which shall enable you to live with joy, and which shall enable you to triumph in that hour when you are brought face to face with your best friend, Death; that shall take you where you shall hear the thunder of that choral song, which, though not far from us, is yet inaudible, which, though we can not hear it, like the ocean itself murmurs and rolls upon our shores.

IT is guilt and fear that blacken dying. Hope and love make it sweeter than being born. And so the day of death is better than the day of birth, and it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. It is really so to those who know it, and put it to proof.

I HOPE God will have so much consideration for my weakness — if it be a weakness — as to let me drop down in my harness, and in the full energy of work. I have no fear whatever of dying: it is only the fear of living that I have before my eyes.

LIVE by faith of God, give your heart to Christ, take him as your personal Saviour, yield as a child every thing to him as a father, and you will have no occasion to fear death.

When I look back, and read of the early Christains, I am charmed to find how they always felt about dying. They had such a sense of dying in Jesus, such a sense of the reality of the heavenly home, such a sense of the glory of the future state, that they could take their children, and put them, as it were, into the hands of God, and rejoice, and sing hymns of gratulation that they were about to go; and they could meet together over their dead as men meet to celebrate a great victory. This feeling is lost out of the Church; it is largely lost out of men's apprehension; and it seems to me that it will be one of the beneficent features in the development of Christianity in our age, and in the future ages, to bring back again in the experience of men the beauty of death, the triumph of death, and the overhanging light and glory that ought to destroy that darkness which to us, for the most part, envelops the door of the grave.

When we comprehend the fullness of what death will do for us, in all our outlook and in all our forelook dying is triumphing. Not any bower of roses is so festooned in June. Not where the jessamine and honeysuckle twine, and lovers sit, is there so fair a sight, so sweet a prospect, as where a soul in its early years is flying away, out of life and out of time, through the gate of death, — the rosy gate of death, the royal gate of death, the golden gate of death, the pearly gate of death.

FROM PRAYERS.

GRANT that the eyes of those who love thee may be opened, that they may see how beautiful a thing is death, when God folds those who are dear to him in his arms, and bears them into his house.

IN the midst of toils, under burdens, with darkness hanging about our path, we look, though we know not their full meaning, to these precious promises which make the future so bright, which destroy the fear of dying, and which take sadness away from decay and decline in years.

MAY we be equal to all the emergencies of our life, God strengthening us, heaven tempting us by its bright vision. And, upwinging our way, may we discern the great invisible realm through which we are moving, and have, therefore, the power to subdue things visible, the transient present, and to live above the world while we are living in it. And when we have gone through life, let us not be afraid of death! May that be the Gate Beautiful to us, and may we go through it rejoicing and singing into the great singing land of happiness.

As the days hasten, as the years are drawing nigh, when we, too, shall soon pass, give to us tokens and premonitions of our own acceptance. Grant that more and more we may throw forward our investments, and lay up our treasure in heaven. Grant that more and more the cords which make earth so precious may be ready to part, so that there may be nothing here to hold us when we should go, every thing there to draw us when we should rise. When death comes, may we neither dread nor hate it, but with the eye of faith see its inward heart and nature. How merciful, how more balmy than sleep, how kind, how full of God's multitudinous blessings, is that providence which takes us away from the limitations of time, of sin, and of sorrow upon earth, and brings us into the presence of our God, into the exaltation of the heavenly state, where are radiant joy, and all peace and purity! This is thy gift, O thou atoning Jesus! O thou that hast died for us, and in whom we live, by whom our sins are cleansed away, give us unclouded faith! O thou who art Prince and Saviour, save us now, in dying, and beyond; and bring us into the infinite joy of thy Father's kingdom, where we will praise the Father the Son, and the Holy Spirit! *Amen.*

THOU wilt walk to the grave with us, who hast gone every step of the way thyself.

WHEN we have passed into the twilight of life, and our sun seems to be setting, let us call back, "I live!"

XI.

The House Eternal in the Heavens.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you." — JOHN xiv: 1, 2.

I THREW the brown-black seeds into the dirt: there stands the glowing spike all a-blossom. I sowed to

the flesh: I shall reap of the spirit. I gave dust to dust. God wrapped in his arms my child. He tended my dear ones. He loved into sweeter beauty my friends. They are nobler than when I elected them. And in the heavenly land they wait. What? How looking? In what occupations? We know not precisely. But this we know generally, that faith, hope, love, and all that can be evolved out of them in human experience, are for ever unchanged, except to grow brighter and brighter.

WHERE the blessed are, is heaven; but whether it is near or far, whether it is above or below, we know not.

I BELIEVE that I shall know my friends, and that they will know me, in heaven. I know that we shall be as the angels of God; I know that we shall be satisfied, because we shall be like him; I know that we shall be sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what that shall be. Nobody can now tell what that means. I shall know you, but it will be in your coronation robes. It will be when you have on your crowns, not of silver or of gold, but of a glorious, heavenly, divine virtue. It will be when you shall bear the palm, not of any perishing tree, but of immortalities gathered in you.

As a poet is left to imagine what he pleases, and as an artist is left to draw what he pleases, so you may imagine and draw what you please; only the results at which you arrive will not be authoritative. This, however, is certain, that our friends are not lost. This is certain, that they are not less than they were on earth. This is certain, that they are more joy-bearing and joy-producing than they were here. This is certain, that we shall be satisfied.

O GRAVE! thy hand crowns as no monarch can. Knighted are we, not by the touch of the sword of any soldier, or king, or prince. Trouble it is that lays its sword on men's shoulders, and says, "Rise up, sir knight!" One look into heaven pays better than the whole experience of a life of joy here. And the blessedness of the world to come ought to take away from this world all weight of its trouble.

IN JESUS, the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega, the soul's nurse, the soul's mother, the soul's Saviour, the providence and the grace, the all in this world that we can know of God, — in him the Father dwells, and he in the Father; so that they who have seen Jesus, have seen the Father also. Him I shall see in the magnitude and in the glory of the then revealed beauty of the Godhead. And I

shall be like him, as the miniature is like the full size; and I shall be satisfied.

"How long, O Lord! how long?" may be sounded out from the temple and from under the altar; but in that land where there is no temple and no altar there are none who cry, "How long?" All who are there have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and now they sing for ever, and rejoice without pain or sickness or tears. Take heed to their example; for in multitudes they stand on the battlements of heaven, crying to you in your distress, "Come! The Spirit and the bride say, Come. There is rest here. Let him that heareth say, Come. Whosoever is athirst, let him come and drink of the water of life freely."

In heaven are the spirits of the just, made perfect. Oh for the last touch of perfection! We have it not, but they have it. And when we come to think of the heavenly state and of its possibilities, when we come to think of all that addresses the sympathy, the hope, and the gladness of our souls, as our friends are brought or as we ourselves come to the edge of the eternal world to be launched into it, how much there is that ought to inspire us, and make us bless God that we do not live alway!

FROM PRAYERS.

WE are in the midst of mortal toils, in uncertainties, in strifes that have no fruit but sorrow: and we are glad to believe that there is a world where all things do move in harmony; where wisdom is perfect; where guidance is without erring; where all do help all, and all love all; where the lowest and the least are great, and the greatest bow down themselves unto the least; where thou art, O thou eternal and helpful God!

ALL thy creatures do rejoice in the goodness of God, unto whose land of rest we are sending pilgrims. They who brought us up, they who taught us to love thee, they who taught our knees to bow in prayer, and our lips to syllable the words, — they are chanting before the throne evermore; not according to the picture that our mind forms, though we labor as best we may on an undeveloped sketch, but in a glory without name, and with a power transcending human thought or experience. We thank thee for their rest. We thank thee for the service that they rendered us. There are many of our companions with whom we have taken sweet counsel upon earth. We walked hand in hand, and labored together. Enthralled with care, we drudge on in this material life; but

they have heard the call, and gone before. We do not envy them; but, Lord, grant that we may be ready to follow whenever thou comest for us.

And though we can not understand thee any more than insects can understand us, yet we feel, even while we do not understand. There is wafted to us a sense of divine graciousness and goodness. Thy kingdom, which shall come when the earth shall have rolled away, and all its burdens shall have sunk under the waves of time for ever; that new kingdom, in which shall dwell righteousness, and in which the light and the joy shall be as the face of God, when thy heart shall stand for the sun, and for the moon, and for the stars; that kingdom to which thy children shall be translated, and in which they shall be blessed, — we are drawing near to it. We know it by the warmth and the sweet odors which are wafted to us.

We are hastening from this world of change to the permanence and the glory of that coming life. All that is of knowledge, all that is of joy, of purity, is reserved for us. All that, in detail, which belongs to our heavenly life, is yet hidden from us. All we know is, that the pure shall dwell together; that all sorrow and sighing shall be taken away; that there shall be no more mistakes; that there shall be no such mixture as defiles our enjoyments upon earth. We shall be as the angels of God.

How great is the number of those who are above us!

How great is the number of those whose songs roll over our heads unheard, and yet are full of melody and joy! And others are passing on, and going thither continually.

OH to dwell where is neither summer nor winter; to dwell where the trees and the flowers do not come to beauty and fruit-bearing at long intervals; to dwell where no one misunderstands! Oh to dwell in the prospects of an unfolding, without fearfulness of old age, or of breaking-down poverties, or of degradations, or of any other such thing!

Lord, grant that we may enter with all our hearts into this perfectness; that its vision may be with us; that we may all endure such cross-bearing and such self-denial as shall bring about in us, some day or other, whatever is Godlike, pure, just, true, and of good report. Grant that we may in this mortal life begin to weave those garments which we shall wear in the eternal sphere.

WHEN we draw near to that other and better city, whose bright domes flash God's eternal light, and over whose battlements come sweet voices to us, saying, "Come, come," one single look, one waft of its perfume, one echo of its joy, will repay us for every tear, for every sorrow, and for every discouragement.

THOU hast thrown open the gate of the world beyond, and hast made us to hear the voices that are uttered within, and to understand that whatever may be of time, of

our body does not triumph. But are they taken from our inward man? Are they taken from that which is to be saved, — the spiritual man? Are they taken from memory? Are they taken from love? Are they taken from the scope and reach of the imagination, which in its sanctified form is only another name for faith? Do we not sometimes dwell with them more intimately than we did when they were with us on earth? The care of them is no longer ours: that love-burden we bear no longer, since they are with the angels of God and with God; and we shed tears over what seems to be our loss. But do they not hover in the air over our heads?

Oh, it is not when your children are with you, it is not when you see and hear them, that they are most to you: it is when the sad assembly is gone; it is when you have carried your children out, and said farewell, and come home again, and day and night are full of sweet memories; it is when the daisies have resumed their growing again in the place where the little form was laid; it is when summer and winter are full of touches and suggestions of them; it is when you can not look up toward God without thinking of them, nor look down toward yourself and not think of them; it is when they have gone out of your arms, and are living to you only by the power of the imagination, — that they are the most

to you. The invisible children are the realest children, the sweetest children, the truest children, the children that touch our hearts as no hands of flesh ever could touch them.

No one can tell why a child that is promising and virtuous, and in whom center the hopes of the parent, should be taken before it has grown up. There is in human philosophy no answer to these questions that can satisfy the heart. The only reply that can be made to them is, that the branch that is broken here will have its full growth there; that children whose life is cut short in this world will have a new life under better auspices in the world to come; that what we lose on this side of the grave, we shall have again when we reach the other side. There comes in a larger sense of life. There comes in a thought of expansion and opening.

It is hard to lose your children; therefore consecrate them, that they may never be lost.

From the stand-point of the family, what a glimpse we get of the world to come, where the law is love, where the human heart feeds itself from the great fountain of life and light and love, God, and where

every one is to every one in intensity of affection what the wisest, deepest-hearted mother is to the babe that lies in her bosom! In such society as that, one's weary soul might long to rest. And when it pleases God, marking those that are fit for heaven that he wants for it, to call them home, oh into what summer they go from earthly winter, and into what blessed society do they enter, — into that rest which remaineth for the people of God, and where the whole outflow of life divine and angelic is as the radiancy of a mother's heart over her first-born and best beloved! God takes them up into his arms, and puts his hand upon their head, and loves them, saying to every bereaved heart, "Suffer little children to come unto me."

I BELIEVE that we shall know our children, as I believe that they shall know us. Will they not have grown? Very likely: I do not know; I can not say. One thing I believe, and that is, that faith, hope, and love are not relative. All that in my children which contained the seed of promise, all that which made them my companions and my joy, — that shall abide, and shall be mine. They will not appear as they did in their mortal bodies. Their bodies will then be rare and exquisite compared with those which they wore on earth. But there will be lineaments by which I shall identify them.

And this is my liberty. It is not God's revelation. It is my necessity. And I am not rebuked when I indulge in such thoughts. My heart cries out to those who have loved me, and gone to the heavenly land; and when I cry to them, I hear a voice answering, as the Spirit and the bride are represented as saying, "Come!" At night, by day, at twilight, in joy and in sorrow, I hear the voices of loved ones saying, "Come!"

It is not wise, when we are suffering, to look back too much for the causes of our suffering, or to question what it can have been sent for, or why God deals so with us.

Look at the murmuring of a young mother. Her life was one flush of joy so long as her cradle was to her like the gate of heaven: but the cradle is desolate; and she sits alone, and she says, "What have I done? Why has God been so cruel to me?"

O foolish creature! do you suppose all suffering is sent according to desert?

Now God puts you under a discipline of suffering, and leaves you to say, not this, "Where did it come from?" but this, "What can I do with it?" It is not for us to say, "Why was I sick?" but, "Having been overtaken by sickness, what can I do with it, what learn from it, how best use it for my own good?"

SOME seem to think that a man, to be a Christian, ought to be able not to suffer when suffering comes; but the ache of suffering is a part of its medicine. A mother is not called upon, when she has given up her child to God, to say, "I suffer none." You are to suffer. No afflictions for the present are joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.

ICE breaks many a branch, and so I see a great many persons bowed down and crushed by their afflictions. But now and then I meet one that sings in affliction, and then I thank God for my own sake as well as his. There is no such sweet singing as a song in the night. You recollect the story of the woman who, when her only child died, in rapture looked up as with the face of an angel, and said, "I give you joy, my darling." That single sentence has gone with me years and years down through my life, quickening and comforting me.

Is the cradle empty? that empty cradle is your pulpit, from which to preach Jesus, a present help to you in time of trouble.

WHEN the young mother sheds the first glowing leaf in autumn, and the babe is carried from her arms and buried, and she, like some fragrant bush in the morning covered with dew, shakes tears from every twig, because I, too, do not measure every one of her sighs and every one of her sobs, do I not sympathize with her? For I say to myself, "What is this loss but the making of a greater nature in her!" She buries the babe to keep it. So only do we keep our children as children, when we put them away from us in infancy, and see them no more until we meet them in heaven. They remain shrined in the imagination, and they are little children for ever. And do I not see what patience and gentleness it will work in her, and what serene dignity is already beginning to steal upon her? And do I not know that God is calling her in taking this little child? He does not take it, perhaps, for the purpose of educating her, but he takes it for his own wise purposes; and the sorrow that is left behind is a means of education.

O MOTHER! my heart breaks with your heart when your cradle is empty. But shall I call back the child? Nay; sooner pluck a star out of heaven than call back that child to this wintry blast. Shall I call back your young and dear and blooming friend? Nay. You are left in some bitterness for

a time. But make not a man out of angel again. Let him rejoice.

Your child is in a spring-land. It is in a summer-world. It is with God. You have given it back to Him who lent it to you.

Now, the giving back is very hard. But you can not give back to God all that you received with your child. You can not give back to God those springs of new and deeper affection which were awakened by the coming of this little one. You can not give back to God the experiences which you have had in dwelling with your darling. You can not give back to God the hours which, when you look upon them now, seem like one golden chain of linked happiness.

You are better, you are riper, you are richer, even in this hour of bereavement, than you were. God gave, and he has not taken away except in outward form. He holds, he keeps, he reserves, he watches, he loves. You shall have again that which you have given back to him only outwardly.

Meanwhile the key is in your hand. And it is not a black iron key: it is a golden key of faith and of love. This little child has taught you to follow it. There will not be a sunrise or a sunset when you will not in imagination go through the gate of heaven after it. There is no door so fast that a mother's love and a father's love will not open it, and follow a beloved child. And so, by its

ministration, this child will guide you a thousand times into a realization of the great spirit-land, and into a faith of the invisible, which will make you as much larger as it makes you less dependent on the body, and more rich in the fruitage of the spirit.

WHEN the apple-tree blossoms, you laugh; and you do not cry when you pick the apple. But when man blossoms, man laughs; and then, when God picks the fruit, he cries. Why, your child is not your child until you have lost him. No bird cries when the shell is broken, and the birdling comes forth, or when, a little later, it leaves the nest, and wings its way through the air. Only mothers do that when their children, released from earth, fly away to a better world.

How few there are who feel, that, from the time the door of life opens and a child is born, God has drawn his hand out from near his own heart, and lent something of himself to the parent, and said, "Keep it till I come: take this my own child, and educate it for me, and bring it to heaven!" It is a very solemn thing to have children, of which you are not only the parent, but the guardian and the guide, and in some sense the savior.

SUPPOSE, when God spares the life of your child, you should say (if you are blessed with the means), "I will make this significant by finding an orphan-child, and I will make my benefaction to that child a perpetual memorial for the life of my dear child." Or has God taken away your child, that sweetest girl? As you lay her in the grave, you will need no memorial of her. Yet the hand of God was in the event. Why should you not set apart something to signify your sense of God's presence with you in your affliction?

DEARLY beloved, do not be afraid to die. Do not be afraid to let your children die. That would be as if a mother rose-bush should be so enamored of the buds which it has carried all winter long, that, when spring calls them, it should say, "Do not blossom, buds; do not blossom." Let your children go when God wants them.

THE birds that sang in my house, and that nestled in my cradle—mine—they do not sleep where their little bodies are. I have not lost them. They are all singing in the boughs of the Tree of Life.

SINCE only days and weeks are between us and those who have gone before, since joy and sorrow alike are bearing us to the same abode, ought we not to find consolation and patience, yea, and a sobered gladness, that we are known in heaven by our forerunners? Children are the hands by which we take hold of heaven. By these tendrils we clasp it, and climb thitherward faster as every cord is loosed that bound us here, faster as every heart that we loved draws us upward.

GOD has appointed flowers for every period. Some are made to blossom in earliest spring, some in midsummer, many are appointed for the autumn, and some God sets to put wreaths on the very brow of winter. In like manner there are different periods of blossoming out of life. We know not what is the secret work that goes on within. What tears we shed because God takes our children to bring up for us! Whenever the golden gate is opened, and our beloved ones pass through, we may be sad that we are left in the drear wilderness, but not that they have entered into the city of their coronation.

FROM PRAYERS.

BLESS the dear children. Sorrows are awaiting them; temptations shall beset them; tears shall be wrung from them. And yet, O God! thou art stronger than sorrow; and thou canst carry them through crying and through tribulation, and save them yet to great joy here, and to immortality hereafter. We can not ask that sorrows, which prophesy themselves already, shall not come. Since thou hast been made perfect through suffering, why should we not be made perfect through suffering? But we commend them, in this stormy world, with its temptations and sins, to thy fatherly thought and care and guidance. Oh, take care of them, that they may not stumble with fatal downfall!

WE pray that thou wilt spare their lives to their parents if it please thee; but if thou lovest them so well as to long for them in heaven, and they take their flight thither that they may dwell with thee, then be gracious to thy servants, and grant that sorrow may not waste them, and that they may know something at least of the blessedness of giving to God gifts which are precious to him Of silver and gold they have none to give, nor have they treasures to give, nor is there any thing that they can give

to thee but themselves and their children. But these are great gifts, gifts that are large as eternity itself.

How many parents are there whose eyes weep! How many are there who are full of sorrows, and who must come to thee, if they take thee as they need thee, as a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief! Have compassion on them, and teach them how to ease themselves of their burdens by casting them upon the Lord. If they have but little faith, do thou comfort them, and strengthen their faith. If there are any that sit doubtful and in twilight, watching by the side of their sick children, will the Lord be pleased to rebuke the disease, and restore their darlings to them; but prepare them for any event of thy providence which is best.

We remember the years, far gone backward, when our way was overwhelmed with sorrows; and yet, year after year, we have so long thought of our little ones in heaven that they now seem as if they had been nowhere else, and as if heaven had a multitude of little children that are calling to us and comforting us from above.

Oh, may this ministration of the heavenly host, bound to so many of us by cords that death itself can not sunder, be to us light and joy, even in the darkest hour!

We rejoice that the little pilgrims are safe. No storm hath pursued their ship, or can, in the land on whose shore breaks no wave, and whose air is distempered by

no winds or storms. They rest sweetly. They are in angel charge, nearest to God. Thine own elect angels are their guardians; and in their bosoms, or led by their hands, they do repose or walk in that fair land.

In thy glory is our rest. In thy presence the out-reaching and longing of our hearts is satisfied. Our fathers and mothers dwell with thee. Our brothers and sisters have gone before to lay the foundations of the household again in heaven. In the convoy of thine angels we have sent thither our babes. There are the companions of our youth. Our hearts are as full of thanks as shrubs are of the rain and of the dewdrops of the morning.

We thank thee that thou hast aforetime been in this household, and blessed it — oh in what measure! with what joy! with what gladness overflowing!

Nor art thou angry. Nor hast thou rebuked them. Thou hast come, and taken that from them which they least of all could spare. Yet, had it been another, they still would have felt that that was the one they could not spare. Thou hast taken, and what thou hast taken from their arms they could not spare. But what is too good for thee? What is too much for thee to ask? Yet thou whose hands did feel the piercing nails, and whose side did feel the spear, thou who didst suffer unto death for us, — thou wilt not willingly wound us, or hurt us, or rend and tear us, as if thou wert filled with fury. Thou art gracious, thou art gentle, thou art loving; and all thy way is a way of mercy.

MAY the thoughts of these parents walk upon flowers all the way to the garden of the Lord; and may they see how much reason they have for gladness and thanksgiving in the midst of their grief. We pray that thou wilt strengthen them, and make them better by sorrow. May there be medicine in heartache for them. May they be stronger for the duties that remain. May they be larger of heart and more gracious of nature toward the children that are yet under their care. We pray that thou wilt make them adequate day by day for the emergencies of every day.

WE rejoice when thou dost call early those who are prepared to go up unto thee, whose root has been there, who have gathered in life chiefly its hopes, and all its sweet affections and aspirations. We are glad when the pilgrims find that their part of the desert is very short, and that on either side are flowers and cool retreats and rejoicing friends. Not for them is the grave. We lift up with solemn joy our chant of victory. Another escaped unwounded, with strong wing flying straightway to the heavenly land. We rejoice in their joy, and are filled with hope in our own behalf; for every tree that is cut or marked in the thicket, leaves the way plainer for those that come after. Though the air be trackless, though the flight of the spirit through it leaves no mark to the eye, yet those who go before do show us the way.

IF there be any with bereaved hearts, bless them. If there be those whose cradles are empty, bless them.

Thou that didst take little children into thy arms, and they were not afraid of thee, and didst lay thy hands upon their head and bless them, — thou hast not forgotten them, Lord. Thou hast gathered a great many lambs into thine arms, and laid thy heavenly hand upon them; and they are blessed. If there be any wounded hearts that remember their own treasures, seemingly gone, give them faith to rise above sight into the great invisible realm, to follow, and to find not far from the loving Saviour, those whom he hath taken from them.

And we are glad for heaven, and for them that are dwelling therein; and it is sweet and comforting to us to think that the same voices that we taught to speak are now praising God in heaven in strains unknown to us. Nor are we envious that our children have outrun their parents, while we are glad for that rest which remaineth for us.

Oh, how many there are there whom we would hear again! Our arms reach out, that have been emptied. Our hearts long to feel again the head that once covered it. We wait for those that are dear to us as our life. Blessed spirits, we are coming to thee, and are not far away. Come to the battlement, and cry out to us. Come, come, that the Spirit and the bride in your voices may invite us thither. Lord Jesus, we are coming to thee, poor, spent, discouraged, sinful, to be born again and again and again, until we may grow up into thee in all things. Do not despise us. Be very gentle to us.

Put thine arms about us, that we may be carried in the bosom of thy love into our Father's kingdom. And there will we praise the Father, the Son, and the Spirit for evermore. And so, Lord, we commend to thee our children, our households, our friends, our own aims in life, ourselves, our very souls. O thou that art victor over death, thou that hast trodden it beneath thy feet, and reignest God over all, blessed for ever, take care of us! Hold us near to thy bosom! Shine upon us with the light of thy countenance while we live; and then, when our tongues shall be unable to say farewell even, upon earth, may we burst forth into song beyond, and rejoice for ever and for ever in the kingdom of our Father.

May the health and lives of these children be precious in thy sight; or, if they go, may it be as angels who unfasten the door of heaven to let their parents discern, as they enter, the glory and the beauty of that city where so many of our beloved are, and which we seek. And today may there come a voice from out of the heavenly land to many waiting and longing hearts, comforting them and strengthening them.

O God, bless the little ones. As thou didst take them in thine arms again and again, may thy servants be sure that thou art taking them in thine arms now; and if it is best that thou sendest for those whom thou lovest, bitter as it is to part with their children, may thy servants know how to put them in the bosom of Jesus, and be sure that they shall be well brought up in the heavenly land.